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Illinois Issues

January 2004 \$3.95

A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield

ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

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GOV. ROD BLAGOJEVICH SHOOTS HIS MESSAGE INTO ILLINOIS LIVING ROOMS

At the end of the first quarter he's got game.
How's he governing?

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT SPRINGFIELD

CENTER for STATE POLICY and LEADERSHIP
Office of the Executive Director
One University Plaza, MS PAC 409
Springfield, Illinois 62703-5407

January 2004

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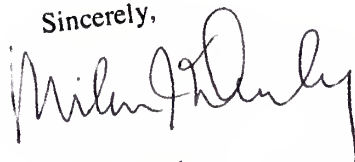
Let me introduce myself. I am Milan Dluhy, the executive director of the new Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The University of Illinois Board of Trustees approved the Center's name and mission in November 2003, and we now are fully operational.

Many people have asked me to define the Center, our mission and our goals. Given the unique location of UIS in the state capital, and the historical emphasis this campus has placed on public affairs, the Center will address issues of public policy, the development of ethical and competent leaders and the education of citizens. Through its public policy research, leadership academies and print, broadcast and other outreach efforts, the Center will support: informed and ethical decision-making by those entrusted with the public good; civic engagement; and activities that improve the quality of life for all. More generally, the Center will focus on serving the research and informational needs of opinion leaders, citizens, state and local government officials, educators and scholars.

We hope you will visit our web site soon at <http://cspl.uis.edu> and participate in our academies, workshops, seminars, symposia and policy summits — and continue to read *Illinois Issues* and other publications from the Center. Our most recent newsletter appears on our web site. I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,



Milan Dluhy
Executive Director and
Professor of public administration

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Illinois Issues

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Peggy Boyer Long



Paul Simon was the real deal in an era of made-for-TV politicians

by Peggy Boyer Long

Paul Simon was no blow-dried made-for-TV politician, no consultant-driven candidate, no finger-in-the-wind public servant.

He was the real deal. Not because he stood for this or that issue in particular, but because, over a lifetime, he was willing to stand for something. And he was willing to stand alone.

Simon's recent book, *Our Culture of Pandering*, arrived in the office a month or two ago. There seemed time enough, then, to reflect on its conclusions. We had the opening of another campaign season to cover, and the beginning of a new legislative session.

But Simon died unexpectedly as we were preparing to go to press with this issue. So there may be no better time to consider the twin angels of public service: courage and popularity.

Simon's book is an analysis of what he called the "harsh reality" of our civic life: leaders who won't lead. His death, our loss, brings this concern into sharper focus. We live in an era, he argued, when trivia trumps substance, when winning — whether it be votes, ratings, readers or profits — is deemed more important than the public interest.

That was by no means a new concern for Simon. We appreciate this here at *Illinois Issues*. Simon was one

of the founders of this magazine and he served on our advisory board. We prepared the tributes you'll read in these pages with a keen awareness that this entire issue, every issue of the magazine for nearly 30 years, constitutes a small part of his legacy.

Once a journalist himself, Simon believed Illinois would benefit from a nonpartisan, nonprofit news magazine that would offer in-depth reporting and scholarship on state policy issues.



Paul Simon, 1928-2003

His interest in the relationship between good journalism and good politics also motivated him to found a program on this campus to train government reporters. This legacy continues to grow. Many graduates of the Public Affairs Reporting program have gone on to journalism careers in this and other Statehouses, and in city council chambers across Illinois and throughout the nation.

Nevertheless, Simon worried in *Pandering* that political journalism is not as good as it was a couple of decades back. He attributed this, in part, to an increasing drive for profits by media owners. As a result, reporting staffs and "news holes" have been shrinking. Pressures for ratings and readers have been going up. And it has become easier for lazy editors and reporters to retail personality rather than assess policy.

"Almost every day for eleven weeks," he wrote, "most newspapers and radio and television stations carried accounts of Congressman Gary Condit of California and an intern of his, Chandra Levy, who disappeared."

Media decision-makers have decided scandal sells. What are they not covering as a result, he asks? Poverty is one issue. International

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affairs is another. This is, he concluded, “not good for the nation and not responsible journalism.”

Simon took issue with education and religious leaders, as well, for coddling instead of challenging the public. And his colleagues in the political arena came in for criticism in a chapter titled, “I Am Your Leader, I Am Following You.”

“Too often,” he wrote, “the winning candidates are those who pander to the polls and to the big campaign contributors.”

The promise to “get tough on crime” is, for instance, a sure crowd pleaser. But that stance glosses over complicated policy questions. “Few candidates suggest that, yes, we should be tough on crime, but we should also be smart on crime.” The simplistic position, Simon argued, means more prisons and less rehabilitation.

State-sanctioned gambling, too, is an example of a short-sighted policy fueled by a desire to win — and by an addiction to campaign cash. “Gambling survives and thrives,” he believed, “because of pandering to these big contributors by public officials.”

But for Simon the bottom line in these and other examples is an increasingly dangerous need to curry favor, to be popular, to win. That point is worth quoting in full.

“The desire to win has always been part of our political scene, but two

things have turned a temptation for candidates into a threat to our free system: First, polls can tell us on a daily basis — hourly, if you want it — what people are thinking. In a zeal to win, political leaders too often use these polls to embrace the whims of public opinion rather than stand firmly for the public interest. Second, campaign contributions now play a huge role in who gets elected. In the process of securing that funding, candidates and, more seriously, officeholders find the time that they should devote to complex issues being devoured by begging for dollars.”

But the other angel of public service is courage.

Simon was willing to take many unpopular positions. Yet many of the things he fought for have come to pass. In the days before he died, Illinois approved some of the death penalty reforms recommended by a panel he co-chaired, as well as a package of ethics reforms few, if any, believed possible.

And this should be stressed: Simon was popular. Some 4,000 people braved bad weather to attend his funeral. That’s the thing about Illinoisans. Wherever they might stand on the issues, they know a real deal when they see one.

He was the real deal. ○

Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at peggyboy@aol.com.

A Simon reader

Paul Simon was a disciplined and prolific writer. He wrote nearly two dozen books, four of them with co-authors. And he cranked them out on a manual typewriter, most during his busiest years as a public official. This sampler offers a mere taste of his eclectic interests.

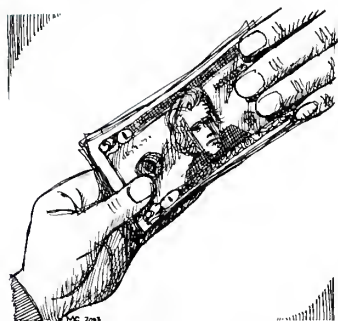
- *Lovejoy: Martyr to Freedom*, 1964, about abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy
- *Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness*, 1965
- *You Want to Change the World? So Change It*, 1971
- *The Once and Future Democrats*, 1982
- *The Glass House*, 1984, about politics and morality in the nation’s capital
- *Advice and Consent*, 1992, about U.S. Supreme Court nominations
- *P.S. The Autobiography of Paul Simon*, 1998
- *Healing America: Values and Vision for the 21st Century*, 2003
- *Our Culture of Pandering*, 2003

Illinois Issues

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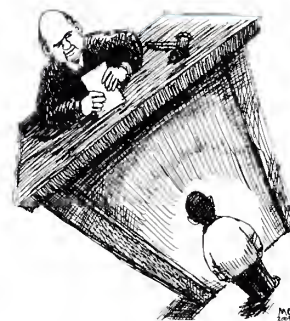
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Illinois graduated from being one of the least-regulated states to one with a comprehensive system of ethical mandates.

Credits: The photograph of Gov. Rod Blagojevich on our cover was taken by Brent Hanson and came to us courtesy of the Illinois Information Service.

Editorial and business office: HRB 10, University of Illinois at Springfield, One University Plaza, Springfield, IL 62703-5407.

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Subscription questions: Illinois Issues, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 2795, Springfield, IL 62708-2795 or call 1-800-508-0266.

Hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday (except holidays). **Subscriptions:** \$39.95 one year/ \$72 two years/ \$105 three years, student rate is \$20 a year. Individual copy is \$3.95. Back issue is \$5. Illinois Issues is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin and is available electronically on our home page: <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>. Illinois Issues (ISSN 0738-9663) is published monthly, except during the summer when July and August are combined. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, IL, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Illinois Issues, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 19243, Springfield, IL 62794-9243.

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BRIEFLY

Photograph courtesy of Hank Vize, Alton Steel Inc.

Bush lifts tariffs as Alton steel mill opens

President George W. Bush's decision to lift federal steel tariffs last month could impact Alton Steel Inc., the processing company that is rising from the ashes of the bankrupt Laclede Steel mill in Alton.

But it's too soon to tell, says Raymond Stillwell, the company's attorney and one of six owners. "We've only been producing steel since September, so it isn't something we have enough information about to know what it will mean to us."

Nearly two years ago, Bush imposed tariffs of as much as 30 percent on some types of imported steel. The move came after the U.S. International Trade Commission found that foreign competitors were "dumping" cheap steel on U.S. markets, sometimes selling their product for as much as 50 percent less than it cost domestic steel mills to produce it. Steel-makers argued this was crippling the U.S. industry. In 2001, more than 20,000 jobs were lost and 39 steel plants went bankrupt (see *Illinois Issues*, September 2002).

Bush lifted the tariff 16 months earlier than scheduled. The move came after the World Trade Organization threatened to fine the United States. For now, the steel industry is holding its collective breath.

What Stillwell and the other officers and investors of Alton Steel do know is that foreign competitors, especially the Chinese, are buying up U.S. scrap steel and driving up the price for American companies. In October, the mill was paying \$164 per ton. That price rose to \$180 per ton in November and went up by \$15 a ton in December. "If we can't control costs," he says, "we won't be able to hire more employees." The company employs about 130 salaried and hourly workers, mostly former employees of Laclede Steel, and it wants to triple or quadruple that number in the next few years.

State Rep. Steve Davis, a Bethalto Democrat, says success of the mill is important to the economy in his district,



Molten steel is again flowing in Alton. A company is rising from the ashes of a shuttered plant.

which also lost an oil refinery and a boxboard plant. "This is a positive step for the future of our area," says Rep. Davis, who in the late 1960s worked at the mill, where his father Buddy was head of the steelworkers union.

The new company operates two production units — an electric melt furnace and a high quality bar mill — that will use mostly recycled steel to make bars and slabs for auto manufacturers, auto parts makers and tool fabricators.

The mill is reported to be the only U.S. steel plant to reopen because of the efforts of local, independent investors. Melvin Cook, the president and driving force behind the reopening, had success buying another Laclede Steel mill in Memphis in 1996. It made a profit the first year. He sold his interest in that company to open the Alton mill, where he has deep roots. He started there as an hourly worker, spent several years as a union steward then joined management and worked his way up to an executive position.

Stillwell credits the union for agreeing to new work rules that allowed the plant to open. "Employees are motivated to do what needs to be done."

Company officials and union leaders say a new cooperative culture exists at the mill. "The guys are happy to be back at work," says Terry Wooden, president of United Steelworkers of America Union Local 3643. "Everybody is working together to make a good, quality product so the company can be profitable and grow."

The union negotiated a five-year contract with the average hourly wage of \$13.20. Soon, Wooden says, a "gain-sharing" incentive program based on company-wide productivity and quality will kick in. That could add close to 20 percent to the hourly wage. The employees' benefits include full medical, dental, vision and life insurance as well as a 401k profit-sharing plan. "It's a good startup agreement for a steel mill starting out new," says Wooden.

Stillwell also credits cooperation between state and federal officials. Davis, along with the other area state legislators, Rep. Jay Hoffman, a Collinsville Democrat, and Sen. William Haine, an Alton Democrat, worked with the state Environmental Protection Agency to get the necessary clearance to reopen the mill. U.S. Reps. Jerry Costello, a Belleville Democrat, and John Shimkus, a Collinsville Republican, worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The hurdle was an environmental remediation plan requiring costly cleanup from the previous mill. "That was a deal killer," says Davis. "A lot of credit goes to [Illinois] Director Renee Cipriano, who jumped in with both feet and made a commitment to get this plant running."

The state environmental agency worked with the federal EPA to create a new plan. The company will pay up to \$30 million over 20 years to clean up the property. Without that agreement, says Davis, the old mill "would have sat there for the next 100 years as a superfund site and never would have been cleaned up."

Beverley Scobel

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

SHERIDAN REOPENS

An effort to reduce recidivism

The Sheridan Correctional Center in LaSalle County will reopen this month. The move is part of a two-pronged approach, along with parole reform, to help offenders stay out of prison. The administration expects Sheridan to become a national model for that effort.

The facility was closed for budgetary reasons by former Gov. George Ryan in fiscal year 2003. Now Gov. Rod Blagojevich will use the center to rehabilitate drug offenders. He committed nearly \$24 million to open and run the 1,300-bed medium security prison for the rest of this fiscal year and \$48 million in the fiscal year 2005 budget.

"Drug offenders alone have a recidivism rate of 53 percent," says Deanne Benos, assistant director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. She adds that the recidivism rate for property crimes committed to support drug habits boosts that percentage. Given this, the recidivism rate for offenders of drug-related crimes is outpacing the rate for sex offenders.

Sheridan is part of the governor's strategy to reduce crime, which in the long run will reduce the state's inmate population, says Benos. A former policy adviser to the governor, she was recently appointed to the No. 2 spot at the corrections department to focus on crime and recidivism reduction. The plan, she says, envisions tighter law enforcement supervision standards and smarter re-entry programs, including getting the Sheridan Center up and running and reforming parole.

"For every dollar invested, the state saves seven," she says. As of early November, there were 43,565 adults in Illinois prisons, with each inmate costing taxpayers \$20,929 per year.

More closely monitoring prisoners released on parole is another facet of the governor's plan. The administration has authorized funding for the department to double the number of parole agents over the next four years. But even when the 370 new hires are trained and on the job, there will be just 740 parole officers supervising more than 37,000 parolees.

Nevertheless, Benos says, those officers will monitor the parolees more closely and "will get tough when they need to get tough and get smart on prevention." If parolees fall back into old habits that lead to crime, the supervising officer will send them back to prison. But if ex-offenders slip back into substance abuse, the officer will see that they enter a program that allows them to work on their problems and stay in the community. "Then those with a drug problem will not be taking up resources needed for violent criminals," Benos says.

Approximately 73 percent of ex-offenders return to the Chicago area. Of those, more than four of every 10 return to just 10 zip codes, according to the corrections department.

Sheridan is the base for a pilot program using Community Reentry Councils in some of those communities. The volunteer councils, staffed by the department, will include faith-based groups and successful ex-offenders, as well as law enforcement and community leaders who can ensure that parolees are supervised and guided to such services as job training, drug treatment, family counseling and anger management. The commitment, says Benos, is to help former prisoners re-enter society "safely, peacefully and successfully."

Beverly Scobell

Judicial pay hike debate continues despite ruling

The three statewide officials who mounted a challenge to an automatic cost-of-living pay hike for judges suffered a setback in a Cook County courtroom in November, but the controversy over pay, power and constitutional principles is far from over.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office indicated it will appeal an order from Cook County Circuit Judge John Madden that called for immediate raises for the state's 900-plus jurists. A Chicago-based reviewing court will hear that appeal, but the state Supreme Court has the final say on such matters.

Normally, judges, legislators and other top state officials receive yearly boosts to their salaries that are tied to a federal inflation gauge. Those annual increases became automatic under a law passed in 1991.

Last spring, legislators included enough money for the raises in the budget they sent to Gov. Rod Blagojevich, but the governor vetoed the additional funds. That veto triggered a face-off between the high court, which ordered the raises in its payroll, and Comptroller Dan Hynes, who refused to pay them. The veto also prompted a number of lawsuits, which eventually all went to Madden to decide.

The judges argue that the Illinois Constitution prohibits their salaries from being "diminished" in the middle of their terms, to prevent retribution over politically unpopular decisions. They say the yearly increases are part of their salaries because they were promised to the judges at the beginning of their terms.

Publicly, Blagojevich says the state can't afford to pay highly compensated state employees even more at a time when the government is in the middle of a fiscal crisis.

Now, the matter will go before a panel of three judges who, like Madden, will be put in the awkward position of deciding their own salaries. They are permitted to do so, however, based on the "doctrine of necessity."

That means that, when all judges have a conflict of interest, some judge must still rule on the case in order to give parties a day in court. It has also been used, for example, to let judges hear cases concerning the federal income tax.

Part of the lawsuit still remains before Madden in the Cook County trial court. He has yet to decide on whether judges are entitled to raises they were denied in the fiscal year that ended July 1.

There is a key difference in the circumstances surrounding the pay hikes for those two years: Legislators made a specific exception to the 1991 law to stop the pay increases for last year, but they did not do that for this year. As a matter of fact, the House and Senate approved legislation in the spring that would have given judges back the raise from last year, but Blagojevich vetoed it.

Lawyers for the Illinois Judges Association, which brought the suit, argue that the conflict is about separation of powers, not money. Still, the lowest-paid state judges receive \$127,000 a year, compared to the starting salaries of \$125,000 for law school grads in big Chicago firms.

For the Blagojevich Administration, there is no question the central issue in the stand-off is money. And as long as the state budget is tight, judicial pay raises will likely generate plenty of arguments, both in courtrooms and outside of them.

Daniel C. Vock
Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

PRAIRIE PARTHENON

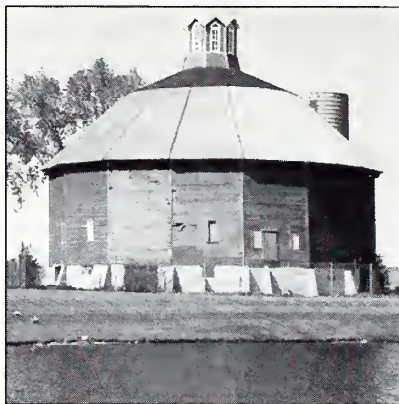
Saving a one-of-a-kind barn

When Lester Teeple decided to build his 16-sided dairy barn in rural Elgin in 1885, the area was providing milk and other dairy products to the growing city of Chicago. Kane County already was selling enough dairy products that the Elgin Board of Trade set butter and cheese prices for much of the nation. Nearly 120 years later, the unique barn, a reminder of the county's dairy history, needs expensive repairs.

Sometimes referred to as the "prairie parthenon" because of its dimensions and design, it is the only 16-sided barn ever built in Illinois and is believed to be the oldest and the largest 16-sided barn in the nation. It stands 85 feet high to its domed roof, which is 85 feet in diameter. It is assembled with regular dimension lumber — no beams, just two by sixes and two by fours — all balloon framed, with no interior supports. Its cupola, torn off by a storm, was rebuilt atop the dome a few years ago.

The Teeple Barn was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, but 10 years later it was sold to a developer. Since the 1996 formation of AgTech, the nonprofit group created to restore the barn, more than

Photograph courtesy of Scott Berger



Illinois' only 16-sided barn gets more funding for restoration.

\$250,000 has been invested to stabilize it, reconstruct the critical compression ring where all the roof rafters meet and rebuild the cupola.

The barn sits in U.S. Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert's district. With his support, a \$149,000 grant was included in the omnibus spending bill signed by the president in February. The grant, which will be funded through the Saving America's Treasures program, must be matched by private fundraising. AgTech has two years to reach that goal.

"There is no better way to fundraise," says Marianne Nelson, treasurer of

AgTech. "Just like with public radio, people respond more favorably to a challenge."

The barn will be restored at its original location for its original use. AgTech decided against pursuing an adaptive reuse of the building as an agricultural education center or moving it to a more rural location. It sits on corporate property at the intersection of two major roads.

Though it is now surrounded by cars rather than cows, the barn will remain a landmark, reminding visitors that the area once served as a dairy center for that growing metropolis to the east.

Beverly Scobell

QUOTABLE

“I guess you could say I decided that it was cheaper than a divorce.”

Longtime Republican powerhouse William Cellini speaking to the Springfield State Journal-Register about his decision to terminate his lobbying business at the Illinois Capitol. A conflict-of-interest provision of the ethics reform law approved by lawmakers in their fall session prohibits lobbyists, and their spouses, from serving on most state boards and commissions. Julie Cellini chairs the board of trustees of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which oversees the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. She spent years as a volunteer helping to establish that library in Springfield.

GALENA TRAIL

Road improvements build on history

Driving along U.S. Route 20 through the hills of northwest Illinois can be relaxing. The mostly undeveloped countryside may make travelers think of a slower time. Ironically, though, it traces one of Illinois' earliest business routes. The road parallels the Galena Trail, an early stagecoach line that carried pioneers to opportunities surrounding one of the state's first booming businesses, the lead mines at Galena.

Today, however, for those who simply need to get from one place to another at an appointed time, the two-lane can be a nightmare. So the state Department of Transportation has a plan to widen U.S. 20 to four lanes. The department has completed the environmental impact study, and this year will begin designing the bypass around Galena, the first stage in the 46-mile Galena to Freeport improvement project. Construction, which will cost \$711 million, could begin as soon as 2006, provided the General Assembly makes the funds available.

Because tourism is now the major business in the area, local interests have lobbied for a fast freeway that will complete the link between Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa, with stops in Rockford, Freeport, Elizabeth and Galena.

Safety is a key concern. When the original road was built, engineers followed different standards, says Jon McCormick, the transportation department's project coordinator. The road followed the contours of the land, creating unsafe conditions today. "Sight distance is a real problem. There are few places to pass," McCormick says. "There are lots of trucks on the road and some of them have trouble with the grades, making them slower."

The department calls the project the Glacier Shadow Pass Super Highway. According to the project description, the name captures how the land came to be and what it may mean for future area residents. "It is a departure point setting future agendas that link us to the past."

Beverly Scobell

Most voters pan amendment to prohibit gay marriage

Fifty-six percent of the respondents in the National Annenberg Election Survey '04 are opposed to a Constitutional amendment to prohibit same-sex marriage.

Calls for a federal amendment were raised in Congress following the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's decision ordering that state's legislature to adopt a same-sex marriage statute.

Most respondents, however, were opposed to same-sex marriages. The survey is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

http://www.appcpenn.org/haesl2003_03_gay-marriage_pr.pdf

PRESSBOX

The Associated Press reports that Illinois is leading the Midwest in loss of manufacturing jobs.

The decline in this state's manufacturing base began more than a decade ago, but it has accelerated "at a startling pace" in the past three years, according to the AP's analysis.

Manufacturing has declined nationwide, but the AP concludes that more than 150,000 Illinois manufacturing jobs, or one in every six, have vanished since June 2000 — an average of more than 100 a day.

The job cuts are spurring manufacturing efficiency. "But the trend raises important and often troublesome questions in every corner of the state, from Chicago, the state's economic engine, to the small towns dotting the rural landscape and the blue-collar bastions of central and northwestern Illinois. It's a pocketbook issue, no matter the size, from the smallest family budget to the state's \$52 billion spending plan."

The decline can be traced to automation and competition from developing countries, as well as the economy. Even after the economic picture improves, the AP reports, experts predict Illinois manufacturing will change. "Instead of giant factories with thousands of workers, the state will move toward small, specialty plants with anywhere from a handful to a few hundred employees."

Companies that survive will have to be "faster, better and smarter."

The New Yorker argues that redistricting of representational maps at the federal and state levels has transformed American politics.

In an essay in that magazine's December 8 issue, Jeffrey Toobin writes that "the effects of partisan gerrymandering go well beyond the protection of incumbents. ... It has also changed the kind of people who win seats in Congress and the way they behave once they arrive."

He reports that in congressional and state legislative districts that have been rendered safe for a single party, incumbents face their toughest challengers in primaries. Because primary voters tend to be more partisan, candidates and elected officials from "safe" districts stick to the extremes of their respective party bases; they don't have to worry about "November electability."

In fact, an overwhelming number of U.S. House seats are safe. Thus, Congress has become an increasingly partisan and polarized institution. The same thing is happening in state legislatures. Toobin quotes Jim Leach, a moderate Republican and 14-term congressman from Iowa: "The American political system today is structurally geared against the center, which means that the great majority of Americans feel left out of the decision-making process."

Toobin calls partisan gerrymandering unwise. But in early December, the U.S. Supreme Court was scheduled to begin deliberations on whether it is even constitutional. ○

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Council weighs long term care problems

The Illinois Council on Long Term Care wants to transform the state's nursing home system. "The public and consumers, residents and families, advocates and government, and the nursing home profession itself all recognize that there has to be a better way to provide health care services in Illinois, and that the current long term care system needs to change," notes the council's report, *Visions for the Future: Transforming Nursing Home Care in Illinois*.

The council recommends incentive programs for recruiting and training staff. It also urges the state to devote 20 percent of its existing nursing scholarships to nurses who are willing to work in long term care.

<http://www.nursinghome.org/prolpopups/releases/visionsforthefuture.htm>

Update

The Farnsworth House will stay in Plano. A preservation group bought Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's architectural masterpiece at auction, spending \$7.5 million (see *Illinois Issues*, September 2001, page 28).

Candidates subject to finance reforms

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to uphold key provisions of the McCain-Feingold federal campaign finance law will have profound repercussions for elections in 2004. So says a nonprofit group that tracks money in politics.

McCain-Feingold, approved in 2002, restricts national parties from spending or raising "soft money," or contributions that are not tied to specific candidates. The court upheld the soft money ban and other major provisions in a 5-4 decision. Soft money, which doesn't face the limits set for direct donations to candidates, can have a corrupting influence on lawmakers and party officials, contends the Center for Responsive Politics, a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan research group.

The court also upheld restrictions on spending by independent advocacy groups on "issue" ads in the weeks leading to an election. And the court rejected as "functionally meaningless" a 1976 standard used to distinguish between campaign and issue ads. The standard was responsible for most soft money abuses because it covered few ads actually designed to influence an election outcome.

Among the results of the limits, according to the center:

- The national political parties will have to bolster their efforts to raise limited, regulated "hard money" contributions. The Republicans enjoy an advantage over Democrats in this area. Thus, the Democrats can be expected to ramp up their small donor fundraising efforts.
- State party committees are likely to raise more money than before as a result of the law's soft money ban, but they, too, are subject to new limits on spending during the course of a federal election campaign.

Statehouse Bureau Chief *Illinois Issues*

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Scoring points

Gov. Rod Blagojevich shoots his message into Illinois living rooms. At the end of the first quarter he's still got game. How's he governing?

by Dave McKinney

Photographs by Brent Hanson, courtesy of the Illinois Information Service

When Gov. Rod Blagojevich summoned reporters to his Statehouse office during the November veto session, he ridiculed lawmakers as a bunch of “drunken sailors” for threatening to restore more than \$148 million of the spending cuts he had made over the summer.

That confrontational and now infamous phrase captivated headline

writers. But lost amid the blustery rhetoric was another, equally descriptive metaphor: Blagojevich compared the legislature to the hometown favorites and himself to the road team doing battle on someone else's turf. “They're just running amok here at home,” the Democrat said, peering squarely into the TV cameras with a message aimed at Illinois' living rooms.

“We do the best we can to persuade them. But they'll do what they want to do.”

That perspective is the one that captures the essence of this young governor as he finishes his first year in Illinois' most powerful office. He's brash, combative and media savvy. He has opted to govern from Chicago rather than live in the Executive



Gov. Rod Blagojevich wants voters to see him as a political road warrior, ready to defy long odds in the home arena of the entrenched interests running state government. A runner himself, the governor showed stamina during last summer's annual Illinois State Fair Parade in Springfield.

Mansion and work out of Room 207 in the Capitol. And he wants voters to see him as a political road warrior, ready to defy long odds in the home arena of the entrenched interests running state government.

So far he has managed to pull this off, burnishing his image as the outsider while getting most everything he wants. "Given the fact that virtually all the things that mattered to us legislatively have passed so far," Blagojevich told *Illinois Issues* in a December interview, "I have no regrets on how we've approached the first year."

As he enters his second year, though, the governor must map out a new legislative agenda that is likely to be dominated, yet again, by the state's gloomy financial condition. To take the sports analogy a step further: While the first quarter is coming to a close, there are three more quarters to play. And, increasingly, his administration is scoring critics, particularly from within his own party. They say he hasn't mastered the art of consensus, he doesn't communicate with legislators and he opts to lead by press

conference. They say he and his staff are undisciplined and lack focus. And that's just the Democrats.

Meanwhile, Republicans, relegated to the tiniest patch of real estate in the Capitol, see potential for political salvation in the turmoil the glib-speaking Blagojevich has helped generate in Springfield.

"He's buoyant. He has these wonderful one-liners. He's always attempting to be warm and fuzzy. You can't dislike him," says state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, head of the Illinois Republican Party and a potential gubernatorial rival in 2006. "But from a professional standpoint he's a mess. There's no leadership. The state is adrift."

So far, the criticism hasn't stuck. He's at his best when mixing with the public, and voters appear disposed to support him.

But the game isn't over, and Blagojevich will need the legislature to win. This spring, for instance, the state faces an estimated \$2 billion shortfall for the next fiscal year that begins in July. Should this fiscal year's budget come

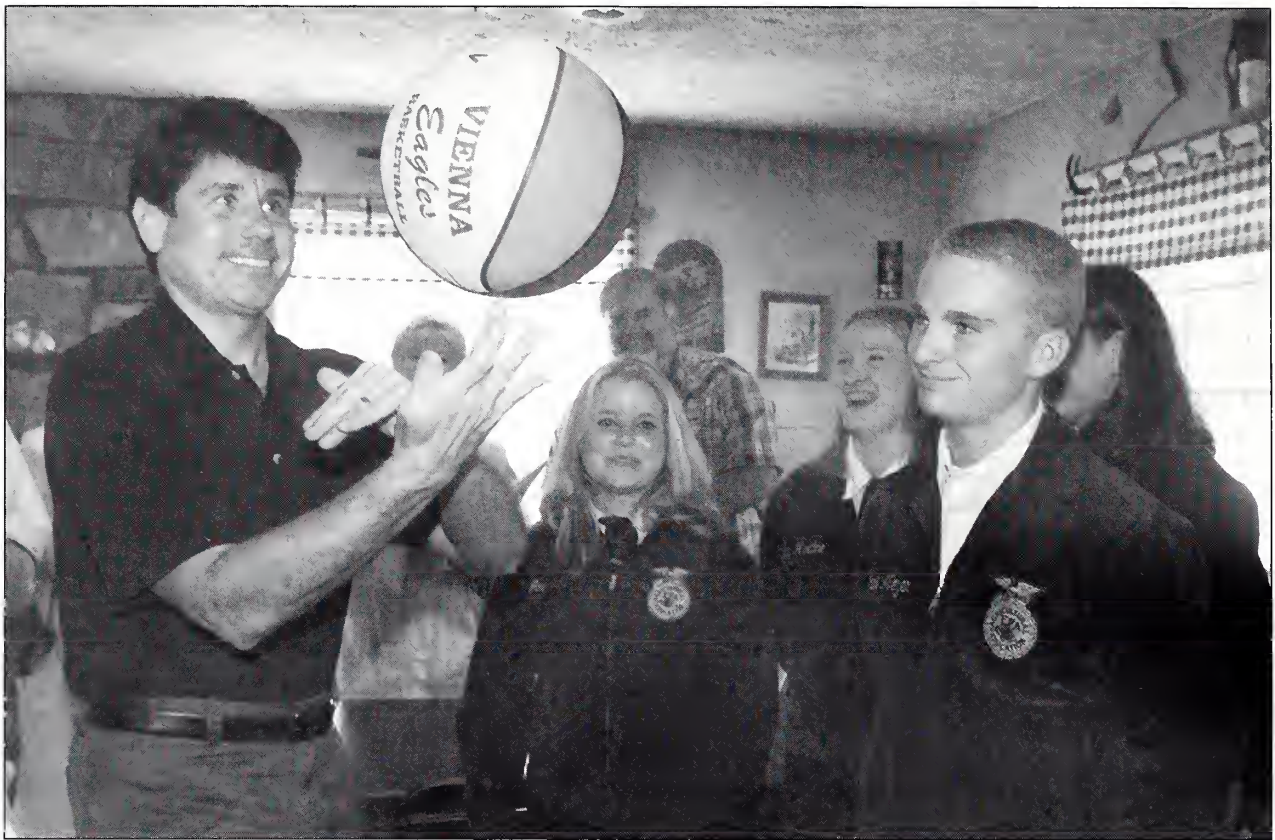
unhinged — something the governor insists won't happen — a good working relationship with lawmakers will be doubly important.

Blagojevich's formula for winning points with voters could strain that relationship. It revolves around "changing the old way of doing business" at the Statehouse — something at which he feels he has succeeded. As good as anything Madison Avenue might have cooked up, the strategy is part of his effort to be viewed as the antithesis of George Ryan, his Republican predecessor — the guy voters disapproved of but pols loved. Blagojevich aims to show Illinois that it no longer has a chief executive willing to wine and dine lawmakers at the Executive Mansion, winning their votes by dishing out pork.

"That system has to change. I know it, I presume you know it and I know the people know it. We are going to keep fighting to change this system, a system that has way too much cynicism, a system that has too many misplaced priorities and a system that spends the people's money with



Criticism of the governor's leadership hasn't stuck. He's at his best mixing with the public, and voters appear disposed to support him.



Blagojevich spent his first summer as governor traveling the state. On one trip he stopped at a restaurant in the southern Illinois town of Vienna.

reckless disregard,” Blagojevich says.

“There will be hundreds of battles along the way. We’re going to lose some. We’re going to win some. But in this process, I think what you’re getting from the executive branch this time, unlike the previous administration, is going to be an executive that will keep an eye on the taxpayers’ dollars.”

Blagojevich has accomplished much in his first year. In fact, it could be argued that he was as effective in his first year as Ryan, who knew few equals in his ability to work the General Assembly.

Perhaps Blagojevich’s most enduring achievement was the new ethics law he and legislators negotiated this fall. Inspired by the licenses-for-bribes scandal that toppled Ryan after one term, the final package includes new commissions and several inspector general positions to better police government misconduct. It prohibits lobbyists and their spouses from serving on most state boards and commissions. It requires unpaid political advisers of statewide officeholders to disclose their financial interests.

The most comprehensive rewrite

of this state’s ethics laws since the 1970s, the reforms are the result of Blagojevich’s decision to veto a weaker package approved by lawmakers last spring. That legislation lacked ethics commissions or inspectors general for statewide officeholders and the legislature, provisions the governor wanted.

Blagojevich has succeeded on other fronts as well. He convinced lawmakers to go along with a risky budget plan aimed at erasing a \$5 billion budget deficit he inherited from Ryan. It called for no hikes in state income or sales taxes, allowing Blagojevich to remain faithful to a campaign pledge. Yet he managed to increase funding for elementary and secondary education by \$400 million.

To make his spending plan work, the governor orchestrated steep cuts in other programs, raised more than 100 fees, proposed the sale of the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago and other state property and moved to auction the state’s disputed 10th casino license. Together, the moves would have raised \$550 million, but they are non-starters midway through this fiscal year. The sale of the Thompson Center

remains a possibility in coming months, but the administration has given up on the sale of the Emerald Casino license, at least for this year, because of its tangled legal status.

Blagojevich bought himself some budgetary wiggle room, however, by pushing a \$10 billion borrowing plan billed as a way to shore up the state’s pension systems. He likened the idea to refinancing the state’s debt to future retirees. But, in the short term, it enabled the administration to cover required pension payments out of the state’s main checking account while freeing up \$2 billion for day-to-day operating expenses.

Blagojevich also enacted sweeping death penalty reforms that ban executions of the mentally retarded, give defendants more access to evidence and grant the Illinois Supreme Court more authority to throw out improper verdicts in death penalty cases. That package was agreed to this fall, too. The governor had, in a bow to police unions that supported his campaign, struck a provision on police perjury. Ultimately, he and police organizations compromised with

lawmakers on the matter and a process will be in place to strip cops of their badges if they lie in capital cases.

In a series of gestures to organized labor, Blagojevich also helped win passage of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's plan to expand O'Hare Airport, which is expected to generate 195,000 jobs, and another measure to hike the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.50 an hour over two years. That increase in base pay for Illinois workers will give the state the highest minimum wage in the Midwest.

And Blagojevich signed legislation designed to cap the high cost of prescription drugs. The measure would set up a new program for seniors and the disabled, allowing the state to negotiate for medicines in bulk and pass along savings of up to 30 percent for enrollees. Further, the governor wants to import cheaper Canadian drugs for state workers and has pressed President George W. Bush's administration to relax federal restrictions on the sale of over-the-border drugs for all consumers.

During the fall session, Blagojevich was able to block all but 26 legislative override attempts out of 115 total vetoes. At the same time, he was forced to defend \$220 million in spending cuts. Lawmakers voted to restore only about \$20 million of that amount.

But in his first year, Blagojevich did take one very public misstep: He rushed to sign a complex telecommunications package pushed in the spring by SBC Communications. Headed by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's brother William, the phone and Internet company launched an aggressive lobbying effort for legislation allowing SBC to charge rivals higher wholesale rates for using the company's phone lines that are wired to homes and businesses. The Citizens Utility Board, and even Lt. Gov. Patrick Quinn, opposed the measure, but the governor signed the bill only hours after it hit his desk. In a blow to Blagojevich, a federal judge disagreed with his decision by issuing an injunction to block the law, finding that it was anti-competitive and in conflict with federal law.

Ignoring that bump in the road, Blagojevich's supporters praise the rookie governor. "I think he's doing a fine job as governor," says lobbyist

and former Republican Gov. James Thompson, who co-chaired Blagojevich's transition team. "I've said that publicly from the day he took office. I still say it today. His relationship with the legislature will always ebb and flow, as every governor's has, including mine. But I think he's a bright, eager, smart politician who's got his pulse on the feelings of the people of Illinois."

Still, not everyone is a fan. Blagojevich has made a surprising number of enemies. This is noteworthy because, when Democrats won the governor's office in 2002, along with both chambers of the legislature, there was giddiness at the state Capitol. It represented the first period of Democratic dominance since the mid-1970s, and offered that party the first chance in a quarter century to dictate an agenda.

But at times the tension between Blagojevich and his erstwhile allies has been thick, rooted in poor communication between the executive and legislative branches. The governor is increasingly comfortable at using his bully pulpit but hasn't yet mastered the art of picking up the phone.

Asked to assess the governor's communication skills with the legislature, Democratic Senate President Emil Jones says, "Well, he does a pretty good job of communicating — if I read the papers in time."

Blagojevich engaged in a public fight with Jones over the surprise amendatory veto of the death penalty provision on cops who commit perjury. He dueled, too, with Democratic Secretary of State Jesse White over \$49 million in cuts the governor imposed last spring on White's budget. That conflict flared again in the fall session when Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan allowed a vote to restore nearly \$5 million more than White and Blagojevich agreed to in October.

The governor's relationship with Madigan has been described as icy, due perhaps to the age-old distrust in Chicago between North and South Side political organizations. Blagojevich, of course, is the son-in-law of North Side Chicago Alderman Richard Mell, while Madigan controls one of the city's most powerful ward organizations near Midway Airport on Chicago's

Southwest Side.

Likewise, Blagojevich's ties to the Black and Latino caucuses have been strained. As an example, the governor refused to sign several Latino-supported measures last summer after Sen. Miguel del Valle, a Chicago Democrat, likened him to a "used car dealer" for cutting millions of dollars targeted for social programs, though he had made a commitment to fund them. The measures, aimed at discouraging Latina teen pregnancies, enabling Puerto Rican-trained nurses to get Illinois licenses more easily and requiring women and minorities to be included in more clinical trials, became law anyway under a constitutional provision. Under that provision, a bill automatically becomes law if the governor takes no action within 60 days. This represented the first time an Illinois governor has used such a tactic since the 1930s, and it was interpreted as an effort by Blagojevich to muzzle his critics.

"To send a message this way is clumsy and it's short-sighted," del Valle said at the time. "From a political standpoint, it makes no sense, and it puts into question the reform credentials of this administration."

Blagojevich's most vocal critics do seem to be clustered in the Senate Democratic caucus, where some members believe he can't be trusted. Yet relations worsened when the governor used his divisive "drunken sailor" line. "He doesn't like it when we chastise him, and we don't like it when he chastises us," says Democratic Sen. Denny Jacobs of East Moline. "I mean, if he wants to get into a war of words, it's like I tell people: I was born in the gutter. If you want to go there, c'mon, it's that simple. But to me, that's not the issue. The issue is the old adage: Politics is a matter of addition, not subtraction, and he does not add very well."

But Blagojevich and his allies argue that any tensions are a natural outgrowth of the checks-and-balances system of the executive and legislative branches, that any quarrels lawmakers have with the governor will evaporate the moment one of them needs a favor.

"There's no question he could improve his relations with members of the General Assembly, but I think he's got time to do that," says House



The governor is brash, combative and media savvy. When he met with Statehouse reporters during the legislature's fall veto session, he called lawmakers a bunch of "drunken sailors" for threatening to restore state spending cuts. The comment captivated headline writers.

Minority Leader Tom Cross, an Oswego Republican and one of Blagojevich's closest legislative allies. "Members of the General Assembly always want something from the governor's office. Those days will come if he wants to do that. He has picked a way to govern, and I probably wouldn't do it the way he's done it. But it's just style, and I'm not going to be critical of it."

Blagojevich's management style is built on a brain trust of youthful advisers with experience from outside Illinois, a strategy driven partly by his recurrent desire to be positioned as the outsider with a fresh perspective. Blagojevich's chief of staff Lon Monk is his law school roommate and a former sports agent from California. His deputy governor Bradley Tusk is a former congressional aide and assistant to Republican New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. While both top aides have performed ably during Blagojevich's first year, some critics question why more homegrown political talent isn't in the mix — individuals who might be more adept at soothing raw feelings in the legislature.

"Are there not qualified people who

have been waiting, who know the score and who have all the capabilities, who are Illinois born and bred?" Topinka asks. "He has to go and pick a roommate from California and some guy from Bloomberg's administration in New York who have no concept of how the state of Illinois works."

Besides Monk and Tusk, the governor has relied on a cadre of other less visible advisers, including former Democratic National Chairman David Wilhelm, top fundraiser and roofing contractor Chris Kelly and former congressional chief of staff John Wyma, now a lobbyist. Kelly served as a liaison for Blagojevich in sensitive negotiations before the Illinois Gaming Board over the Emerald Casino. Wilhelm was instrumental in convincing former Federal Emergency Management Agency Director James Lee Witt to head a \$2 million state review of a downtown Chicago high rise fire that killed six government workers in October. And Wyma helped orchestrate Tusk's elevation to deputy governor.

None of these men is on the state payroll, drawing criticism from Senate Republicans who have dubbed them Blagojevich's "shadow government."

Senate Minority Leader Frank Watson, a Greenville Republican, insisted the ethics legislation Blagojevich wanted contain language requiring these three and other unpaid advisers in the executive branch to file financial disclosure forms with the state.

"Those people who sit down and negotiate for the administration, if they have a stake in what's being done, that should be shown by an economic interest statement," Watson said.

Certainly, previous governors have relied on an assortment of behind-the-scenes advisers who weren't on the state payroll, and little was made of it. But this time the issue had legs, driven by Kelly's efforts to broker an Emerald casino deal on the governor's behalf and by the federal government's Operation Safe Road investigation. While Kelly hasn't been accused of wrongdoing, the feds indicted Larry Warner, an unpaid adviser to George Ryan when he was secretary of state, on racketeering and influence-peddling charges stemming in part from his say in doling out state contracts.

To Blagojevich's credit, he agreed to include the disclosure requirement in the



"They're just running amok here at home," Blagojevich told reporters during the lawmakers' fall veto session, peering squarely into the TV cameras with a message aimed at Illinois' living rooms. "We do the best we can to persuade them. But they'll do what they want to do."

ethics package.

Other characteristics define Blagojevich's style. He is chronically tardy to events and meetings. He can be self-deprecating, as when he recalled his days as a Pepperdine University law student who got a "C" in constitutional law. "I barely knew where the law library was," he said. And he sometimes has said things that have been thoroughly questionable. Trying for an Everyman connection, he called the actions of a Cubs fan who interfered with a crucial playoff foul ball "stupid," and jokingly offered to help place the fan in a witness protection program. While Blagojevich — a lifelong Cubs supporter himself — deplored threats against the fan for helping blow a World Series appearance for the team, the governor's words did not help settle the situation.

But those amounted to momentary blips, portals into Blagojevich's way of thinking. Neither those statements nor his squabbles with lawmakers seem to have tainted the public's perception to any great extent, though voters do appear to be watching his performance with some degree of skepticism. The most recent public poll, published by the

Chicago Tribune in late October, showed that 49 percent approve of the job Blagojevich is doing, while 22 percent disapprove. That standing is just below the 50-percent approval rating most politicians consider a minimum margin of safety.

Watson, the Senate Republican leader, says those numbers could trend further in the GOP's direction, particularly if Democrats continue to bicker among themselves. As for Blagojevich's performance, Watson dislikes his frequent attacks on the General Assembly, which remind him of the last Democratic governor, Dan Walker. Mercurial and combative, Walker served but one term in the mid-1970s, a political era marked by strained relations between the executive and legislative branches.

Of Blagojevich, Watson says, "He's taken us on. He's taken the constitutional officers on. Maybe in his eyes that builds him up. But it tears the process down. And, as an institution, we in state government should be working together. There's been former governors who have used this same tactic that didn't survive this process for very long. If that's the direction he wants to go, we'll wait

and see."

Blagojevich is quick to shoot down the comparison, insisting he bears no grudges, even against his harshest Democratic critics. His highest priority, the governor says, isn't winning a popularity contest in Springfield; it's putting the public's interests first.

"When it comes to whether I'm the next Dan Walker, and all the rest, the question presumes the most important priority to me is to just get elected and damn the people. For me, I want to be the best possible governor I can be and worry about getting re-elected later."

Unlike the Senate Republican leader, the more politically moderate Cross says the road-team status Blagojevich has prescribed for himself seems a natural fit. The House leader says his polling shows the governor hasn't hurt himself any by taking on the legislature on its home turf. That may be because, as in any sporting match, the longshot often draws the public's sympathies.

"If you're the away team, you're the underdog," Cross says. "And perhaps he wants to be seen as the underdog." ○

Dave McKinney is Statehouse bureau chief for the Chicago Sun-Times.

Running to the right

The winner of the Republican U.S. Senate primary will have to garner name recognition and prove electability

by Lynn Sweet

A crowd of contenders for the U.S. Senate is rising from the smoking ruins of the Illinois Republican Party. And almost all are running to the right as they aim for the seat being vacated by Peter Fitzgerald, the anti-establishment Inverness Republican who is leaving Washington, D.C., after one term.

An open Senate seat is rare — the last one was in 1996 when the late Paul Simon, a Makanda Democrat, retired. But with a selection of credible primary candidates, the GOP establishment, including Judy Baar Topinka, the state treasurer who

chairs the Illinois party, U.S. House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert of Yorkville and former Gov. Jim Edgar, say they won't try to anoint a nominee. They would have their work cut out for them, anyway. As of mid-December, prior to the filing deadline with the State Board of Elections, seven Republican candidates, all men, most with business resumes, were campaigning for the nomination.

The field breaks down roughly into three tiers: At the top is Andrew McKenna Jr., the Glenview paper company president and namesake

of his well-connected father; Jim Oberweis, chairman of the family-owned Oberweis Dairy in Aurora and the president of a mutual fund and money management firm who lost a 2002 primary bid for the Senate; state Sen. Steven Rauschenberger of Elgin, the only officeholder in the contest; and Jack Ryan, the Wilmette investment banker turned teacher who had put more than \$1.25 million of his own money into the race by fall, giving him the early lead.

In the middle tier for now is retired Air Force Major General John Borling, a Rockford businessman and former

Filing

This edition of *Illinois Issues* was in progress as candidates were filing petitions with the State Board of Elections. The ballot status of some of them could be challenged.

We will keep you posted on the status of the U.S. Senate candidates in future issues and on the magazine's Web site.

For more information, also visit the State Board of Elections' Web site at www.elections.state.il.us.

The editors



John Borling

Hometown: Rockford
Profession: chairman, Performance Consulting Group; Major General, U.S. Air Force (ret.)
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.borlingforsenate.com



Chirinjeev Kathuria

Hometown: Oak Brook
Profession: medical doctor; owner of several high-tech businesses
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.kathuriaforsenate.com



Andrew McKenna Jr.

Hometown: Glenview
Profession: president, Schwarz Paper Co.
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.mckennaforsenate.com

president and CEO of the United Way in Chicago. Borling, a former Vietnam-era fighter pilot, spent six-and-a-half years as a prisoner-of-war in Hanoi.

The third tier is occupied by Chirinjeev Kathuria, an Oak Brook business executive with a medical degree who registered to vote for the first time in June, and former state Rep. Jonathan Wright, an assistant state's attorney from Lincoln who is the only downstate candidate in the race.

After years of intraparty warfare between Illinois conservatives and moderates, there is no moderate in the mold of Edgar or former Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood in the mix. Six of these primary contenders are furiously courting the right. The exception is Borling, the only candidate to support abortion rights. He bills himself as a social moderate and a fiscal conservative. All seven are against more gun laws, a conservative litmus test outside Chicago.

An October poll by the *Chicago Tribune* — taken when Ryan was the only candidate running television spots — showed that most voters had yet to focus on the contest. Almost 60 percent of the potential Republican primary voters were undecided, with

20 percent going to Ryan; 11 percent to Oberweis; 4 percent to Rauschenberger; 3 percent to McKenna and 1 percent to Borling.

"You can't say," says Edgar, "that one is head and shoulders above the other."

The 2004 primary may be remembered as the year of the ambitious "Millionaire MBA." It's unlike any other GOP primary in the past two decades. Four candidates are very rich — Kathuria, McKenna, Oberweis and Ryan — and one of the biggest questions is how much personal money each will put into their campaigns. These four all have master's degrees in business, and they all want to start their political careers at the top. Even Fitzgerald, who bankrolled his 1998 run with his own millions, served six years in the Illinois Senate before graduating to Congress.

This primary is remarkable, too, because none of the candidates has been elected statewide, and none has a lock on an ideological or geographic voter base.

The race is getting national notice. In 2002, the Republican Party paid little attention to Illinois because U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, a Springfield Democrat, was ahead from the start and cruised to a second term. The

little-known Jim Durkin, then a state representative from Westchester, bested Oberweis and Chicago lawyer John Cox, who each self-funded their primary contests.

In 2004, the Illinois race will be one of the marquee November contests because it could help determine which party controls the Senate. Dan Allen, a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee in Washington, D.C., says his group has no interest at this stage in trying to elbow anyone out of the field. "We are pretty impressed by the strength of the field," says Allen. "We are letting it play out."

But Edgar and Wood are concerned that the rightward thrust of this primary campaign will produce a nominee with electability problems. Even Fitzgerald, a conservative, won in 1998 over former Sen. Carol Moseley Braun, the Chicago Democrat, on a record that included support for gun control, patient's rights and environmental protection.

"It is more than obvious that many of the Republican candidates feel they have to run to the extreme right to win the Republican primary," says Wood. "But at what cost in November?" Says



James Oberweis

Hometown: Aurora
Profession: owner, Oberweis Dairy and Oberweis Securities
Past offices/races run: unsuccessful run for U.S. Senate in 2002
Web: www.oberweis2004.com



Steven Rauschenberger

Hometown: Elgin
Profession: former furniture retailer
Past offices/races run: state senator since 1992
Web: www.steve2004.com



Jack Ryan

Hometown: Wilmette
Profession: former investment banker; high school teacher
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.jackryan2004.com



Jonathan Wright

Hometown: Lincoln
Profession: attorney; assistant state's attorney, Logan County
Past offices/races run: former state representative
Web: www.wright2004.com

What they don't have is substantial name recognition. "Nobody knows these guys," says Michael Stokke, U.S. House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert's deputy chief of staff who handles the speaker's political chores. "This is their first walk on the stage."

Edgar, "To win statewide for senator or governor, you cannot be too far from the center."

Still, the Republican Senate hopefuls "all have different strengths," says Topinka, who is rebuilding the party after the 2002 meltdown following the scandals that surrounded former GOP Gov. George Ryan.

What they don't have is substantial name recognition. "Nobody knows these guys," says Michael Stokke, Hastert's deputy chief of staff who handles the speaker's political chores. "This is their first walk on the stage."

The March 16 primary victor could win with less than 30 percent of the vote, which is why many of the hopefuls believe they have a chance.

Borling, who is making his first run for office, says he is targeting veterans, seniors and abortion rights voters, who, if they are interested in that single issue, will have no place else to go in the primary. "I don't think a Republican can win who seeks to restrict the rights of women — or of men," Borling says.

With the nation at war, Borling's 37-and-a-half-year military career could give him traction, if he can rally veterans.

"I have to earn it one VFW at a time," says Borling, a graduate of the Air Force Academy. The former POW has a story to tell, but if he doesn't raise a lot of cash he may have difficulty getting heard. Borling is not wealthy enough to put a significant amount of his own money into the campaign.

Because few major issues have yet to emerge that divide the candidates — with the exception of Borling on abortion — personality and the equally subjective "November electability factor" will likely play a role.

"Politics is a relationship business as much as an issues business," says Ryan.

Ryan's fast start is the result of a front-runner strategy. He decided to be the first candidate to run television ads. He could afford the October early media buy because he is throwing some of his own millions into the race. He pledged to use only \$3 million of his own money for the primary, however. By November, he had spent almost half of that.

"Jack's aggressive media strategy

has opened up a lead," says Ryan campaign manager Jason Miller.

In a sense, Ryan has been roaming the state campaigning for the U.S. Senate for more than two years. Republicans tried to lure him into the 2002 race to face Durbin, but Ryan, after flirting with a run, saw no reason to spend his money to become a sacrificial lamb his first time on the ballot. Yet, 2002 got Ryan around the state.

A graduate of Dartmouth who went on to earn an MBA and a law degree from Harvard, Ryan left the investment banking firm of Goldman Sachs very wealthy. In 2000, he started teaching at Hales Franciscan High School, a Catholic parochial school on Chicago's South Side whose students, Ryan usually notes, are African American.

Ryan went on to join the boards of First Health Group Corp., headquartered in Downers Grove and K12 Inc., a for-profit education company in McLean, Va., that sells curriculum supplies to homeschoolers. Education, particularly school choice, is a major issue for him.

Ryan is running a different campaign in that "we are going after traditional Democratic constituencies while in the Republican primary," with an eye toward the November general election, says Miller. Ryan is holding town meetings among African-American voters in Chicago's Democratic strongholds.

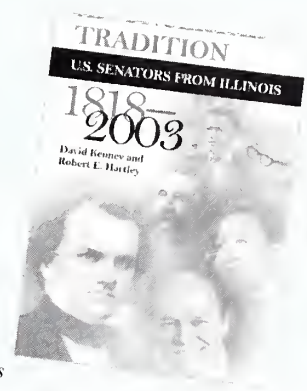
"This is not a Republican electorate who is going to fall for a pretty story," says McKenna. He's the president of Schwarz Paper Co. in Morton Grove and is well known within Chicago-area civic and charitable circles.

His father, Andrew McKenna Sr., is the chairman and CEO of family-owned Schwarz Paper. The senior McKenna's prominence in GOP money circles gave his son a running start in fundraising. By September, the end of the third quarter, McKenna had substantially outraised his rivals, collecting almost \$1.1 million while putting up just \$49,659 of his own money. "I don't believe in self-funded campaigns," says McKenna, who is making job creation a centerpiece of his bid.

McKenna received his undergraduate

From the notorious to the heroic: Illinois' U.S. senators

A new history of this state's U.S. senators is out just as Illinoisans prepare to choose another. David Kenney, a political scientist, and Robert Hartley, a journalist, teamed up to write this first comprehensive look at the 47 individuals who have represented Illinois in the U.S. Senate since statehood. Illinois' storied cast includes such classic political figures as Stephen A. Douglas, Paul Douglas and Everett Dirksen. And it encompasses more recent characters, including Illinois' junior senator, Peter Fitzgerald, who has chosen not to run again. Voters will choose his replacement in November. Kenney and Hartley provide commentary on the quality of service and the political context. *An Uncertain Tradition: U.S. Senators from Illinois 1818-2003* was published by Southern Illinois University Press.



The editors

degree from Notre Dame University and a master's degree in manufacturing management from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management in Evanston. McKenna launched a statewide radio blitz after Thanksgiving.

Will personality be a factor with GOP voters? "I think Republicans want a nominee they can feel good about," says McKenna. "The party's been through a difficult process."

That GOP voters, particularly the conservatives who dominate the primary, will want to know what they are getting is key to Steven Rauschenberger's strategy. First elected to the state Senate in 1992, Rauschenberger's trail of votes means "he can't run away from his record," says communications director Charlie Stone. "He's a known quantity. A lot of these novice millionaires don't have a record."

Rauschenberger, a graduate of the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va., was a salesman in the family's Elgin furniture store before going to Springfield. He is short on money compared to McKenna and Ryan, but perhaps longer on political networking.

The former chair of his legislative chamber's Appropriations Committee and an expert on state budgeting, Rauschenberger has the support of 23 of his 25 GOP state Senate colleagues and an endorsement from Republican U.S. Rep. Henry Hyde of Wood Dale, which he hopes to use to raise national money.

Oberweis says he learned a lot from his 2002 Senate run. This time he

started months earlier. He is planning a "significant" field operation and is determined to put at least a million of his own dollars into his bid.

An Aurora native and an undergraduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who received an MBA at the University of Chicago, he oversees Oberweis Securities, which runs two top-ranked mutual funds, and Oberweis Dairy. Oberweis' rookie run got his name around — the family-run ice cream firm had 18 stores in 2002 and now boasts 32 outlets.

The Oberweis campaign believes it has a name I.D. advantage and some different issues: The dairy chairman is talking about agriculture and has latched onto an anti-immigrant proposal.

But he may be called on the abortion issue. In his 2002 campaign, he said he was supportive of abortion rights. Citing the Taliban, he said government should not impose religious beliefs on people. Now Oberweis is running as an abortion foe.

"Two years ago I did not believe I should use the government to support my views on the sanctity of life," Oberweis says. He says he changed his mind after "giving a lot of thought to the issue."

A political newcomer who has never even bothered to vote, Chirinjeev Kathuria is getting attention only because he has pledged to pour millions of dollars into his first bid for office, though he did not spend any serious money in the first months of his campaign.

If elected, Kathuria, a native of New Delhi, India, would be the first Sikh in the Senate. Concerned that his turban

and beard may puzzle voters, especially in this post-September 11-era, Kathuria's Web site offers a primer in Sikh traditions.

"We present a unique opportunity for the Republican Party, which talks about diversity, to demonstrate it," says Kathuria's campaign manager, Jon Zahm.

Kathuria, an entrepreneur with a string of high-tech companies, received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Brown University and an MBA from Stanford. He says with six other candidates in the race, he could win if he unites the Indo-American and Southeast Asian-American vote.

His campaign was damaged when a *Chicago Tribune* story raised questions about Kathuria's resume and business dealings. He has filed suit against the newspaper.

Former state Rep. Jonathan Wright was remapped out of a district in 2002 after 18 months in the Illinois House. He is now a Logan County assistant state's attorney. He has no paid staff, must keep his day job and has raised hardly any money. Wright says his political base includes Evangelical Christians.

Fitzgerald, whose departure from the Senate touched off the contest, has not ruled out making an endorsement. He is disappointed that none of his would-be successors has embraced his zeal for reform. "I think most conservatives in Illinois will be looking for a reformer," Fitzgerald says. And that, he laments, is "a hunger none of the Republican candidates have tapped into." ○

Lynn Sweet is the Washington bureau chief for the Chicago Sun-Times.

Building from the base

The winner of the Democratic U.S. Senate primary will have to grab the biggest coalition of disparate interests

by Eric Krol

To grasp the lay of the land in the Democratic U.S. Senate primary, it's helpful to see how political support is lining up in Chicago's gay and lesbian community.

Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes is supported by gay officeholders with establishment ties, such as state Rep. Larry McKeon and 44th Ward Alderman Tom Tunney.

Former Chicago Public Schools Board President Gery Chico has the backing of gay Latinos, including Rick Garcia, who is political director of Equality Illinois, the state's gay lobby, because they share ethnicity

and Chico came calling early.

State Sen. Barack Obama of Chicago is generating excitement among rank-and-file gays by running on his liberal record in the General Assembly.

Wealthy former trader Blair Hull of Chicago also has a share of support among rank-and-file gays, mostly because he's been working for it so hard. "There isn't an event in the gay community Blair hasn't been to," Garcia says.

Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas, also a Chicagoan, can point to her sponsorship of a gay rights

measure while serving as a county board member. But she got into the race so late, many potential gay supporters have already made political commitments.

The scramble for votes within that core Democratic constituency mirrors the campaign strategies for votes among other communities of interest for the five major Senate hopefuls. Hynes has sealed up a good chunk of the party's political establishment and major labor groups. Chico is holding onto the support he locked up as the first candidate to enter the race and the first Latino to

Filing

This edition of *Illinois Issues* was in progress as candidates were filing petitions with the State Board of Elections. The ballot status of some of them could be challenged.

We will keep you posted on the status of the U.S. Senate candidates in future issues and on the magazine's Web site.

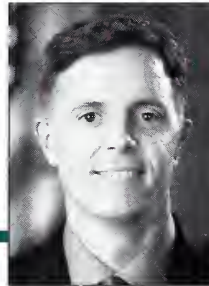
For more information, also visit the State Board of Elections' Web site at www.elections.state.il.us.

The editors



Gery Chico

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: attorney
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.gerychicoforsenate.com



Dan Hynes

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: attorney
Past offices/races run: Illinois comptroller; re-elected once
Web: www.danhynes.com



Blair Hull

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: owner, Hull Trading Co.
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.blairhull.com

run for the U.S. Senate from Illinois. Obama seems to be catching fire with rank-and-file liberals. Hull, without a natural base of support beyond the \$20 million of his own money that he's willing to spend on the primary, is working double-time to take pieces out of the other candidates' bases. And the late-arriving Pappas is trying to find her footing among interest groups to which she might make a plausible claim.

Republican U.S. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald decided not to run for a second term, and the race to replace him is drawing top-shelf Democratic candidates. As of mid-December, just prior to the filing deadline with the State Board of Elections, no fewer than seven Democrats had expressed interest in this race. As a result, the disparate siblings who make up that party's Illinois family have favored brothers or sisters in the race. And the winner will be the one who grabs the largest number of chairs at the table.

In an election in which only slightly more than 1 million votes are expected to be cast, victory rests more on building coalitions than on appealing to the large swathe of the Illinois electorate needed to win in November.

In a multicandidate primary, it could be enough to score 30 percent of the vote. And, in a contest where the candidates will be splitting the Chicago pie, the one who puts together the best downstate network could walk away with the plate.

When turnout is expected to be minimal, the electoral recipe is a matter of motivating and broadening the base. In Illinois, a U.S. Senate seat doesn't light a lot of fires anyway, unlike the patronage-rich governor's mansion or secretary of state's office. If the Democratic presidential nomination is sewn up by the March 16 primary, there won't be much on the ballot to motivate people to leave the warmth of their houses.

This is a primary in which the candidates mostly are in agreement on the issues — President George W. Bush has been bad for the country, job creation is good — with only post-war Iraq providing something of a wedge. Hynes, Pappas and Hull were the only candidates to back Bush's \$87 billion funding request to rebuild that country.

So winning the Democratic nomination will be a matter of approach on the issues. Chico is touting an education plan to train more teachers and rebuild

This is a primary in which the candidates mostly are in agreement on the issues — President George W. Bush has been bad for the country, job creation is good — with only post-war Iraq providing something of a wedge.

more schools. Hull is pitching a national health care program. Hynes and Obama are talking up jobs. Any increase in spending, they say, could be covered by rolling back Bush's tax cuts — a near political impossibility in Washington, D.C.

This race is getting national attention, though. It is key to any Democratic hopes of retaking the Senate. And the prospects in Illinois look good: The Democratic nominee will face a largely untested, conservative



Barack Obama

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: attorney; law professor, University of Chicago
Past offices/races run: state senator since 1997
Web: www.obamaforillinois.com



Maria Pappas

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: attorney
Past offices/races run: Cook County treasurer; County commissioner (1990-98)
Web: www.mariapappas.com



Nancy Skinner

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: television and radio political commentator
Past offices/races run: none
Web: www.skinnerforsenate.com



Joyce Washington

Hometown: Chicago
Profession: nursing, hospital administration and health care consulting
Past offices/races run: unsuccessful bid for lieutenant governor in 2002
Web: www.washingtonforsenate.com

Republican nominee in a state where ticket-topper and fellow conservative Bush lost by 12 percentage points in 2000.

Surviving the primary comes first, though, and the Democratic siblings will be socking it out in minibattles among interest groups.

Hynes, the 35-year-old comptroller, is piling up the most labor support. The two-term officeholder has amassed the backing of 62 unions with more than 700,000 members, including the Teamsters. Hynes' voters will turn out no matter what, which will help if there's a low turnout. Unions are disciplined about getting their troops out. That effort will be important to Hynes downstate.

Obama has virtually all of the labor support Hynes doesn't. The 40-year-old state senator, who represents the Hyde Park area on Chicago's South Side, touts a strong pro-labor voting record, and that helped him score somewhat surprising endorsements from the Service Employees International Union and the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Obama also is expected to get the nod from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. The value of Obama's union support is in Chicago, where he'll have to win decisively to make up for Hynes' expected strong showing downstate.

Among the other candidates, Chico, 47, has the backing of six steelworker unions, an electricians' local and some ethnic umbrella groups, including the Italian and Hispanic labor councils. Hull, 61, brags about being the only candidate to hold a union card — he was a cannery worker in the 1960s — and he has even walked a downstate picket line with striking workers.

But workers aren't the only group of voters the Democrats will be courting in the next couple of months. Perhaps no group is as up-for-grabs in the Democratic Senate primary as women voters. Until Pappas entered the race, Hull was doing all he could to position himself to cover that base. Hull sat on the board of National Abortion Rights Action League

Pro-Choice America and touts his leadership on Title IX, the federal policy requiring universities and high schools to offer equal sports opportunities to women and girls. Pappas' entry could hinder Hull's efforts. She voted to reinstate abortions at Cook County Hospital while a county board member.

Voters who support abortion rights almost certainly won't be able to use that issue as a determining factor anyway. "If they all come back fine, we'll probably endorse all of them," says Pam Sutherland, Planned Parenthood's Springfield lobbyist, of the candidate surveys her group will collect.

Strategists believe that while women won't necessarily vote for women, they will give women candidates a strong look. That means Pappas could end up sharing women's votes with two other women candidates who are expected to be on the ballot: health care executive Joyce Washington, who ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor in 2002, and Nancy Skinner, a radio talk-show host. Skinner's strength is her high-energy style, but she's running a low-budget campaign and she's no longer heard on the radio in Chicago.

Black voters, meanwhile, represent about 25 percent of the Democratic primary vote, which would seem to give leading black candidate Obama a jump-start. But there are signs Obama has yet to cement this base. The state lawmaker lost badly in a primary challenge to 1st District U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush in 2000. Rush hasn't forgotten: He's already cut ads for Hull that are airing on highly influential black radio stations in Chicago.

As a result, Obama has had to counter with his own ads featuring state Sen. James Meeks, who oversees a 16,000-member South Side congregation, and 7th District U.S. Rep. Danny Davis. This has led some observers to question whether the Harvard Law-educated Obama is connecting with the black community.

"While I think the middle class [black community] has signed on, I don't see a lot of grassroots support," says Robert Starks, a political science professor and director of the Harold

Washington Institute at the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. "People will give you their support, but you have to ask them. If [Obama] can't show progress in that community, he can forget about anything else, because that's his base." From Starks' perspective, Washington is working the black grassroots harder and could be a spoiler.

However, Obama, who can point to his work on anti-racial profiling legislation, does have state Senate President Emil Jones and 2nd District U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., both of Chicago, in his camp.

For Hynes, the question is whether black voters remain angry at his father, Thomas Hynes, former Senate president and member of the Democratic National Committee. The elder Hynes briefly ran for Chicago mayor as an independent in 1987 in an effort to unseat Harold Washington, Chicago's first — and only — black mayor. Supporters point out that the younger Hynes has twice won statewide without any backlash from black voters, but he has never faced a primary challenger.

Hull has spent some money to try to build an organization in the black community, part of his strategy to get just enough of every interest group to eke out a primary win.

Like Obama, Chico is having some difficulty shoring up what should be his base. Chico, who is half Mexican, has had to hire a full-time coordinator to build Latino support. Though he is Mayor Richard Daley's former chief of staff, Daley so far is neutral in this race. This means the allied Hispanic Democratic Organization is as well. Fourth District U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez has not endorsed Chico either.

Chico has spent about two-thirds of the \$3 million or so he's raised so far, much of it on early TV ads, to try to boost his candidacy into the top tier. The question is how much more Chico can raise for the stretch. "This is a primary. It's about money and workers," says one Hispanic civic leader who has been involved in politics for more than three decades. Even if

Chico vaults to that top tier, he could be damaged by stories about the collapse of the law firm he led, the once-powerful Altheimer & Gray.

All of the candidates will be looking for votes outside the city. The suburban vote accounted for nearly 14 percent of the Democratic primary total in 2002, up from 8.6 percent in 1998. Most of the credit for that jump goes to losing governor hopeful Paul Vallas, whose education-first candidacy more than doubled the number of Democratic ballots cast in the Republican haven of DuPage County. Vallas isn't on the ballot this time — though he is appearing in a TV ad endorsing Chico — so the suburban influence likely will be more akin to 1998 than 2000.

The candidates are seeking suburban voters more through endorsements than visits. Obama appears to have high appeal for liberals along the lakefront North Shore. He lined up early support from his Senate seatmate, Terry Link, who doubles as the Lake County Democratic chairman. "He spoke out here and the crowd left excited," Link says. Hynes also is trying to hold his own on the North Shore. State Sens. Susan Garrett of Lake Forest and Jeffrey Schoenberg of Evanston are on board, as well as state Rep. Lou Lang of Skokie. Hull is using his considerable bankroll to make suburban inroads, with at least three mail pieces. Pappas has been a top local vote-getter in suburban Cook, where voters don't like the tax collector but like the woman who collects them.

The suburbs and Chicago might make up 70 percent of the vote in this race, but it's the 30 percent of the vote downstate that could decide it. With all of the candidates carving up the Chicago vote, downstate is the place where each can make up lost ground. After all, then-U.S. Rep. Rod Blagojevich was losing to Vallas coming out of the Chicago area, but he rolled up huge margins downstate, where county Democratic chairmen still can direct the vote.

So far, Hynes is the candidate most likely to succeed with this formula. He has been courting downstate organized labor, which provides the backbone of his campaign apparatus.

In the vote-rich Metro East area, Hynes has the backing of influential 12th District U.S. Rep. Jerry Costello and wealthy young attorney John Simmons, who flirted with his own run but is raising money for Hynes through trial lawyers.

Motivating unions to drive the downstate turnout is more important than paying for TV ads, but Hynes hasn't been shy about that either. He is looking to cement his gains among union foot soldiers with a major downstate ad buy that ran from mid-October through at least Thanksgiving.

Not to be outdone, some of the more than \$7 million Hull has spent so far has been used for biographical spots in downstate markets, which have been running since the summer. Polls show that strategy helped him move into second place downstate behind Hynes.

Obama, who is quietly raising more than \$2 million and holding off on spending it, will rely on endorsements from such Quad Cities leaders as 17th District U.S. Rep. Lane Evans of Rock Island and state Sen. Denny Jacobs of East Moline. Obama also hopes to attract support in liberal-leaning college towns and in cities with large numbers of black voters, including Rockford and East St. Louis.

But East St. Louis Mayor Carl Officer is supporting Chico, as are some downstate school superintendents who like Chico's emphasis on education. Chico also has been on the air downstate with TV ads talking about jobs and his background.

Arguably, the biggest question mark downstate — and perhaps the biggest one in the race — is Pappas. Because she didn't declare until early November, Pappas has no downstate organization to speak of. Her campaign aides say she's working on it, but they also are quick to add that Pappas plans to rely on a record of turning around the once-corrupt and inept Cook County treasurer's office as a reason voters should give her a promotion to the Senate. Political analysts question whether that's enough to win support outside that county. Yet an October *Chicago Tribune* poll that put Pappas in a theoretical lead — 45 percent were

The suburbs and Chicago might make up 70 percent of the vote in this race but it's the 30 percent of the vote downstate that could decide it.

undecided — is said to be the final push she needed to get into this race.

Months before the primary, though, Pappas is essentially starting from scratch on fundraising. This led one longtime political operative who has worked for both parties to issue the prediction that "16 percent in the *Tribune* poll could very well be her high-water mark."

Pappas certainly hopes that's not the case, but her late start gives her candidacy a nothing-to-lose fallback.

That's not as true for the other candidates vying to represent the Democratic Party and the interest groups lining up to back them. For Hynes, the election will determine whether his star continues its ascent — and show whether his downstate labor supporters can deliver again. Obama's political future also is at stake, as is proof that black voters can still flex some muscle a decade after former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun made history. For Hull, the Senate bid takes him back to his 1970s roots as a weekend card-counting Nevada blackjack winner. Once again, he's playing with his own money, but this time the stakes are higher. And for Chico, his showing could pave the way for future Latino candidates to run statewide or reveal that minority group has some distance to travel before becoming a political force.

Barring a highly negative and divisive primary, though, whoever wins should be well-positioned to become the state's next U.S. senator. ○

Eric Krol is the political writer for the Arlington Heights-based Daily Herald.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Lawmakers approved financial incentives to keep juveniles out of state lockup. They may reconsider regulating the payday loan industry

PAST DUE *Observers say it's time to regulate short-term loans*

by Daniel C. Vock

Moves over the past five years to govern the payday loan industry have generated election-year fireworks, easily avoided administrative rules and a high-stakes court case — but no agreement between the companies and consumer advocates.

Most groups involved now concede lawmakers have grown weary of the issue. But lenders, activists and regulators are all ready to see some state law on the books. So last spring they sat down at the negotiating table for the first time and made progress toward a compromise.

Those efforts are expected to continue in this legislative session and could lead to a resolution. Yet veterans of the ongoing debate caution they have a long way to go before they can strike an agreement.

The only headway Illinois lawmakers have made since the issue became a hot-button topic in the late 1990s was to grant broad authority to the state Department of Financial Institutions to write its own rules (see *Illinois Issues*, March 2000, page 40). But even those regulations ran into trouble. Lenders sidestepped them by issuing new kinds of loans. They also

challenged, in a dispute now before the Illinois Supreme Court, the agency's authority to write them.

So-called payday loans didn't exist until the mid-1990s, but within years of their introduction the number of outlets offering short-term loans jumped to around 1,000. Typically, customers — often breadwinners in low- to middle-income families — write a post-dated check for cash up front. But the transactions usually come with a hefty price. A \$100 loan due in two weeks could cost a customer \$120 with interest. The cost becomes steeper when the customer can't pay the loan when it's due — as is often the case — and takes another loan to cover the cost of the first one.

Still, lobbyists for the lenders argue the short-term loan companies offer credit to people who can't get it through banks or credit cards. And even people who could get credit elsewhere, the lenders note, turn to payday loans to avoid high late fees for credit card bills or overdraft charges on their checking accounts.

Regulation of the industry is a tricky issue, and not just because of politics. Banking and lending are governed by state and federal regulations, but innovative lenders have often skirted those laws by, for example, partnering with out-of-state banks.

The Department of Financial Institutions' set of rules governing payday loans went into effect in 2001.

By 2002, the agency reported, only 3 percent of the loans it surveyed were subject to them.

Regulating payday loans also is difficult because they are popular with the public. "It's a hard issue for consumer groups to organize around because it is a very personal issue," acknowledges Lynda DeLaforge, co-director of Citizen Action/Illinois. Not many customers want to come forward and admit they applied for loans they couldn't afford to pay back, she says.

In Springfield, three groups have been at odds over how to regulate such loans.

A variety of consumer organizations have rallied under the banner of the "Monsignor Egan Campaign for Payday Loan Reform," named for the late Catholic cleric who spearheaded reform efforts beginning in 1999. John Egan died in 2001, but the groups following his lead continue to push for changes in Springfield. Those organizations include Citizen Action/Illinois, the Catholic Diocese of Joliet, the Illinois Chapter of the Public Institute Research Group and the Woodstock Institute.

They're pushing for limits on the interest charged on the loans, generally promoting a 36 percent cap on annual percentage rates. They also want a 15-day "cooling off" period for repeat customers to prevent them from continually relying on the high-interest loans, says DeLaforge.

And these consumer groups are asking for more disclosure by short-term lenders on the number of loans made, the rates charged and the profits accrued.

There are two categories of industry interests at the table as well. Tony Colletti, the former head lawyer for the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs in former Gov. Jim Edgar's administration, has been lobbying in several states on behalf of the Community Financial Services Association, a national group representing the country's largest chains of short-term lenders.

Now a vice-president of Check into Cash, Colletti says that group is working on state regulations around the country to bolster the reputation of the industry and promote its legitimacy. "Short-term profitability is not as important as long-term credibility."

He says his group is flexible on the type of restrictions it will agree to, noting that it has supported various proposals in different states depending on the local political demands.

In Illinois, the local lenders are represented by various organizations, most notably the Illinois Small Loan Association. That group is comprised of a wide variety of in-state lenders, from large chains to one-shop operations. They have fended off several legislative initiatives since the late 1990s and are more adamant in their opposition to such provisions as interest caps than are their national counterparts. "There's this big lack of understanding, of being able to put yourself in the shoes of the customers who come in," says Steve Brubaker, the executive director of the small

loan association. "Once we close that up, I think we're going to be fine. There's that benefit of fighting every year, because it's given us an opportunity to make people understand what the product is and the fact that people want it."

Many prominent members of the small loan association have ties to the currency exchange industry and know lawmakers and regulators from their efforts in that arena. They've been able to leverage those connections on the payday loan issue. They argue that the interest caps promoted by consumer groups are unreasonably low and would force them out of business. A 36 percent annual percentage rate

He also questions what effect a strict new law would have in protecting customers. Even in such states as Georgia that have strict usury statutes, large payday lenders have made inroads by partnering with out-of-state banks and selling their loans across state lines. Other lenders have used the Internet to accomplish the same thing, he says.

Still, Brubaker maintains that the small loan association is open to some regulations that have been enacted elsewhere. Rate caps and cooling-off periods may be permissible, but not at the level the consumer groups want. Brubaker says his group also is open to legislation like that

enacted by Washington state that transforms a payday loan into an installment loan after a specified number of rollovers.

The groups disagree on other issues. Consumer advocates want a state database to track how many outstanding loans each customer has in order to enforce cooling-off periods, as well as limits on how many loans borrowers can take out at one time. The industry organizations oppose the database, noting that private vendors offer the service.

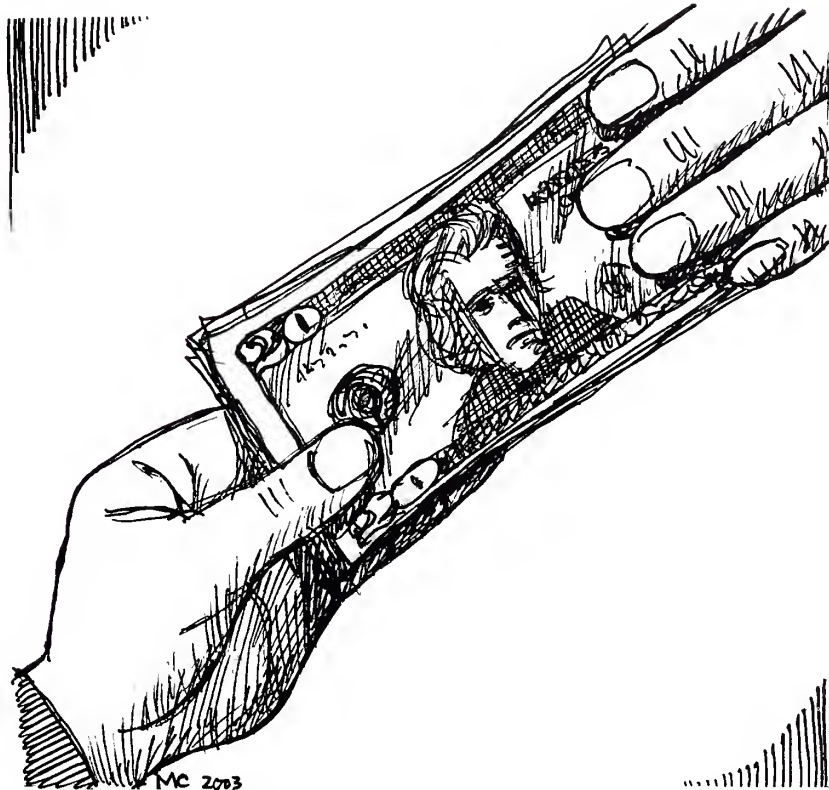
Though some of Illinois' short-term loan rules apply to other types of lenders, those broader requirements have generated

less controversy than those aimed specifically at short-term lenders.

In 2000, the agency announced a new set of rules for loans that lasted 30 days or less, which were designed to address abuses in the payday loan industry. At the time, most payday loans in the state had 14-day terms.

The regulations capped all short-term loans at \$2,000 and limited the

Illustration by Mike Cramer



loan would generate only \$1.38 for a two-week loan of \$100, notes Brubaker. He says that's not enough for lenders to cover their overhead costs and doesn't reflect the risky nature of payday loans for the lenders. Currently, a typical two-week payday loan costs customers about \$20 per \$100, which amounts to a 520 percent APR, Brubaker says.

Though lenders avoided most of the rules by changing their products, they're fighting the regulations to prevent the agency from issuing future rules that could be farther reaching.

refinancing of any loan to two times. They also imposed a 14-day cooling-off period for customers between loans — one of the longest in the country.

Although the rules reflected many of the wishes of consumer advocate groups, their adoption proved to be a largely hollow victory. Lenders side-stepped the regulations by switching to a new type of loan — one that lasts 31 days — that doesn't fall under the scope of the rules. They also stalled the effective date of the rules, then, once they were in force, challenged the agency's authority to implement the changes, which is the question now before the state Supreme Court.

Though lenders avoided most of the rules by changing their products, they're also fighting the regulations to prevent the agency from issuing future rules that could be farther reaching, says Brubaker of the small loan association.

Later this month, former Gov. James Thompson, representing a group of national lenders, will face off in oral arguments in the case against Chicago lawyer Bill Harte, an attorney with long ties to Democrats who is working on behalf of the agency. The justices typically take months after arguments to issue their decisions, which means lobbyists are unlikely to simply await a decision.

The court conflict highlights the contentious history of the issue before the legislature. In 2000, the House and Senate each considered proposals to clamp down on abuses the agency cited in a 1999 report.

Though payday loans were a relatively new phenomenon at the time, many local lenders already had Springfield ties. They opposed proposals championed by consumer advocates to cap interest rates on the short-term loans, arguing that low limits would put most local operators out of business.

Meanwhile, the issue took on political dimensions when Sen. Patrick O'Malley, a Palos Park Republican, sponsored the reform efforts in his chamber. Democrats hoped to unseat O'Malley in the 2000 elections, so

they pushed a variety of consumer friendly alternatives to O'Malley's legislation. With Republicans loyal to the lenders and Democrats holding out for a tougher law, O'Malley's legislation stalled.

Eventually, though, the House and Senate agreed to a measure that gave the department authority to issue rules "that are necessary and appropriate for the protection of consumers in this state." The agency's rules turned out to be similar or identical to components of O'Malley's proposed legislation.

As with all executive regulations, those rules went before the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules for approval. That panel of House and Senate members rejected the proposals, put a six-month hold on them and forwarded the matter to each of the chambers. But neither body acted. The six-month hold expired and, after a short court injunction, the regulations took effect.

The legal debate centers on whether the legislature gave too much power to the executive branch to issue those rules. Industry lawyers argue lawmakers "punted" to the department, in effect giving the agency legislative powers.

The case could give the high court the chance to resolve important questions about the balance of power in Illinois government, but resolution of the conflicting demands of groups calling for payday loan reforms will almost certainly be left to the legislature.

"Clearly we have to do something. We have not solved the problem," says DeLaforge of Citizen Action/Illinois. The ongoing struggle may be getting to lawmakers, too. "They're tired of this issue," says Colletti, the lobbyist for the national group of lenders.

Yet even with the parties sitting at the same table, there's no telling how long it could take to break the impasse. ○

Daniel Vock is Statehouse bureau chief for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

JUVENILE EQUATION

Judges must weigh costs to communities and the state

by Margaret Schroeder

Judge George Timberlake, chief of Illinois' Second Circuit, knows the kids standing before his bench in Mount Vernon need help. Their crimes, whether shoplifting, drinking or property damage, often stem from family conflicts or difficulties in school. When it comes time for sentencing, he must decide how best to punish or rehabilitate a child, while protecting the community.

He has another concern: How much a decision will cost his county.

Judges weigh these issues every day. And many decide it's cheaper or more feasible to sentence juveniles to serve time alongside the other 1,500 kids in the care of Illinois Department of Corrections. Keeping a juvenile in the county, they decide, would be prohibitively expensive. And the services might not be adequate. But sentencing a child to the state lockup will cost their counties next to nothing (see *Illinois Issues*, February 2001, page 19).

"Every judge must consider the financial cost of his decisions to his community and to the state," Timberlake says.

But Chicago Democratic state Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie aims to change this equation. "Judges should make the decision of where this youngster ought to go based on the likeliest successful outcome, not on who is going to foot the bill."

Currie was the chief sponsor of a new law offering counties financial incentives to keep juveniles in local programs. It will take a year to get the initiative up and running, but advocates argue community-based programs will be cheaper in the long

run, and more effective.

This isn't a new idea, but it has been gaining momentum. Cook County, which opened the world's first juvenile court in 1899, already offers a wide array of alternative programs for juveniles. A dozen other counties, including DuPage, Kankakee, Peoria and Williamson, have begun to follow suit. But most have a long way to go.

The state corrections department, with seven secure juvenile detention facilities, does provide many social services, including drug counseling and mental health care. But some in the juvenile justice community believe it's better to offer more tailored help, whether a simple reminder to keep a court date or a more involved program such as electronic monitoring combined with family counseling.

These are services that could be offered close to juveniles' homes.

Advocates also believe prison can turn troubled kids into "hardened" criminals.

"Removing [the juveniles] to

correctional or residential facilities often improves their criminal techniques," says Timberlake, who believes secure detention for nonviolent offenders is generally less desirable than local programs.

Chicago Metropolis 2020, a coalition of business and civic groups, also supports the law's premise that non-violent juveniles are less likely to get into more trouble if they remain in their home communities. Paula Wolff, senior executive of the group, believes state prison can put an otherwise nonviolent youth on the wrong path. "They may start thinking of themselves as criminals. They may end up associating with youth who are violent and in need of incarceration, and they are more likely to become violent themselves."

Furthermore, argues Chip Coldren of the John Howard Association, a prison watchdog group, sending kids to state prison inhibits rehabilitation efforts. "We would prefer that each community or region have a broad

continuum of care available for delinquent and misbehaving youth, from least restrictive community-based settings to most restrictive [secure beds]. Sending youth to [the state corrections department] essentially defeats this, or at least interrupts the desired continuum greatly."

The problem is that most Illinois counties don't have an economic incentive to keep juveniles at home.

Nor do they have the startup funds to begin offering adequate services.

The new law, however, is aimed at fostering the growth of local programs.

Nicknamed "Redeploy Illinois," the law was approved in final form in November after lawmakers agreed to technical changes by Gov. Rod Blagojevich. The law will redirect

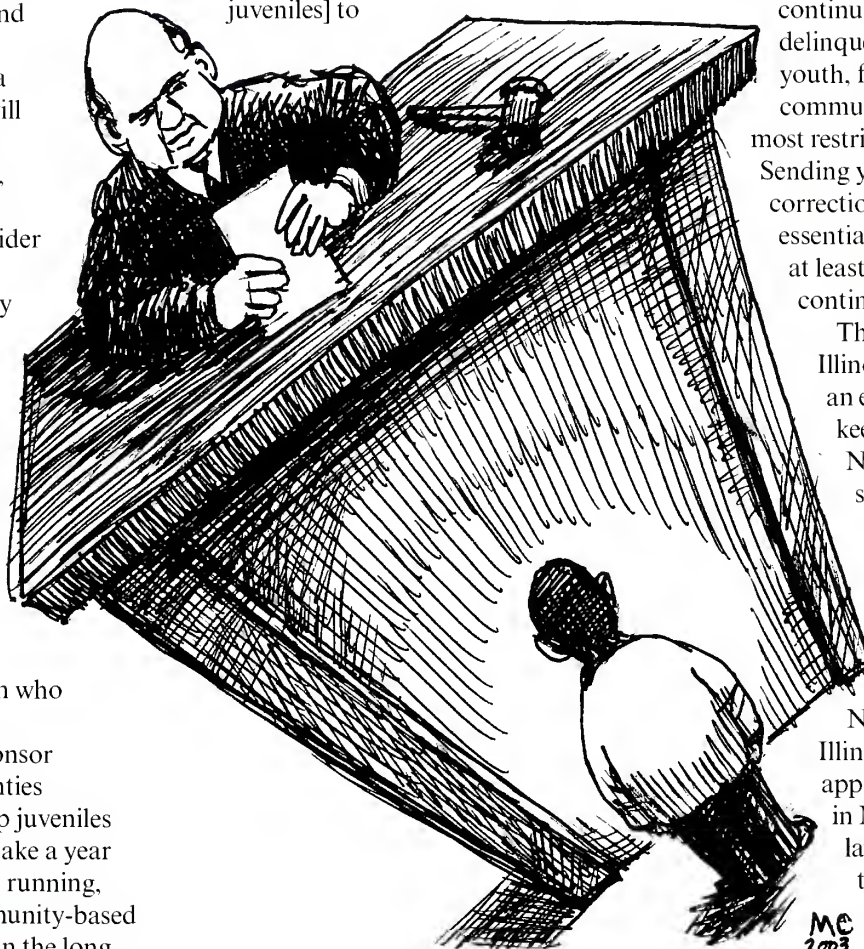


Illustration by Mike Cramer

The law will enable Illinois to follow the lead of a handful of other states that have begun trying to redirect troubled youth away from state incarceration and toward county-based rehabilitation programs.

to counties the dollars that would have been used by the state corrections department to house juveniles. Under the program, counties or groups of counties will be offered the chance to participate. If they choose to do so, they must agree to limit the number of juveniles they send to the state. That reduction will be based on a percentage of the average number of the counties' commitments over the past three years. The counties will receive payments equivalent to the cost of housing those juveniles in a state facility. Those dollars must be used to provide alternative local programs.

The corrections department estimates that over 10 years the program will mean more than \$235 million dollars to the counties.

The law also calls for a state oversight board, and interested counties must draw up plans and apply. Betsy Clarke, president of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative, a nonprofit statewide advocacy group, expects the planning process to take up to a year before selected counties can begin pilot programs.

The law will enable Illinois to follow the lead of a handful of other states that have begun trying to redirect troubled youth away from state incarceration and toward county-based rehabilitation programs, including Missouri, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. This state's plan is modeled on Ohio's program, which has been in place since 1993. In the first year of that program, Ohio had a 42 percent reduction in commitments to the state correctional department.

The savings to Illinois taxpayers could be significant too. Coldren says local programs cost roughly half of what it costs to confine juveniles at a state facility, though he says the price of local programs vary widely. In 2002, the cost of secure detention at the state or regional level averaged \$162.28 a day for each juvenile. In Cook County, judges have an array of less restrictive options, including a "staff-secure shelter" for \$110 per day and a program to notify an offender of a court appearance that costs 50 cents for a postcard and stamp.

The effectiveness of these alternatives

are promising. The notification program, for instance, has cut the rate of "failure to appear" charges by 22 percent. Previously, if juveniles were picked up on misdemeanors after failing to appear for a court date, they wound up in detention. "[They] were locked up with felons just because the judges wanted to see junior in court the next day," says William Siffermann, deputy director of juvenile probation and court services in Cook County.

The state's movement toward local programs isn't supported by everyone. Redeploy Illinois had opponents in the legislature, including Republican state Sen. Peter Roskam of Wheaton. "It's just a bad idea," he says. The law excludes those convicted of first-degree murder or a "Class X" forcible felony, Roskam says, but that leaves out too many violent criminals. "Maybe if [the law] restricted the offenses to non-violent offenses, but it doesn't do that." Roskam adds that leaving sentencing to local jurisdictions will result in an inconsistent application of the law.

Anne Liotta, spokesperson for the Ohio Department of Youth Services, disagrees. She points out that judges and those who work with troubled youth have a higher stake in the outcome than anyone. "They don't take those risks because they live right there," Liotta says.

Michael Rohan, director of juvenile probation and court services in Cook County, says that since his county began offering alternatives in 1996, the number of kids in secure detention has dropped, from more than 750 in 1996 to about 450 today. "The judges would not put kids in these programs if they felt that public safety were in danger."

A grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation helped spark the reforms in Cook County. Over the past decade, that foundation has been working nationally to reduce the number of kids unnecessarily sentenced to detention.

Redeploy Illinois could help. Judge Timberlake thinks so. "I believe that Illinois is at a point in time where there is tremendous opportunity for significant, positive change in the way we deal with juvenile offenders." ○

Margaret Schroeder is a Springfield-based free-lance writer.

BOLD STROKE

Illinois graduated from being one of the least-regulated states to one with a comprehensive system of ethical mandates

by Cynthia Canary

Even veteran observers were stunned by the scope of the ethics reforms lawmakers sent the governor at the close of their fall session. Though everyone knew the issue was in play, few were willing to bet on passage of such a bold package. But by capitalizing on a confluence of factors — new political leadership and public fallout over Illinois' worst-ever political scandal — the previously unthinkable happened.

Lawmakers approved the ethics measure and Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed it into law. As a result, Illinois graduated from being one of the least-regulated states in the nation to one that has a comprehensive system of ethical mandates. Illinois politicians will be required to disclose economic interests, state workers will be prohibited from “revolving door” employment and commissions will set and enforce standards.

How significant is this? In Springfield, it's too easy to dismiss good government as crazy. Most insiders don't put much stock in reform. That's not true, though, for those Illinoisans who aren't insiders, those who have followed the mounting convictions of Operation Safe Road in disbelief, those who are tired of hearing that their government leaders have been served with federal subpoenas.

And it isn't true for those who, in

How did it happen? For decades, Illinoisans swept away mounting evidence of a culture of corruption in their state Capitol.

increasing numbers, are opting out of the electoral process, believing the system is beyond reform. The 2003 Illinois Ethics Act should restore some of their faith in state government.

How did it happen? For decades, Illinoisans swept away mounting evidence of a culture of corruption in their state Capitol. The colorful shenanigans of Illinois politicians have become the stuff of legend: shoeboxes stuffed with cash, insiders enjoying questionable tax breaks and political leaders packed off to jail. If no one championed public corruption per se, some took perverse pride in the belief that politics in our state is far more entertaining than elsewhere.

That is until 1994, when an illegally licensed trucker caused a horrific highway accident that killed six innocent children. The death of those children precipitated a decade-long wake-up call

to the people of Illinois. This tragedy painfully demonstrated that the price of political corruption is far greater than a few wasted pennies tucked into tax bills.

It exposed a multitentacled conspiracy that reached into Illinois' secretary of state office and into George Ryan's successful campaign for governor. Nine years later, federal prosecutors have racked up 59 convictions — and their probe is ongoing.

The problems exposed so far by this investigation: political work conducted on the public payroll; profits reaped by powerful interests from their associations in state government; contacts and favoritism that trumped ability in hiring; shakedowns for campaign cash; and disclosure laws that were too easily evaded.

Yet the political establishment failed to implement procedures to address these problems. So reformers began to work on ethics in earnest in late 1999. Fearful that the courts might eviscerate the 1998 Gift Ban Act regulating gratuities from lobbyists, a coalition began to develop proposals to address core weaknesses in Illinois' governmental ethics. That group included the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Illinois PIRG, the League of Women Voters of Illinois, the Citizen Advocacy Center, Common Cause, Protestants for the Common Good and Citizen Action.

However, years of scandal finally pushed Illinois residents to the breaking point and ethics reform began polling strongly in the 2002 elections.

From the outset, representatives of these groups insisted on provisions to root out corruption and prevent future scandals.

The initial impact of this campaign was glacial. A modest piece of reform legislation banning regulators from soliciting campaign contributions from those they inspect or license was approved in 2002.

However, years of scandal finally pushed Illinois residents to the breaking point and ethics reform began polling strongly in the 2002 elections. Thus, “changing business as usual” became a theme on the campaign trail, giving the issue new momentum. Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Attorney General Lisa Madigan made state government reform a key campaign issue and continued to speak out once elected.

Early in the 93rd General Assembly, House Republican Leader Tom Cross of Oswego introduced a package of ethics legislation, staking his caucus’ reputation on reform. A few legislators joined the effort, most notably Sens. Susan Garrett, a Democrat from Lake Forest, and Kirk Dillard, a Republican from Hinsdale, and Reps. John Fritchey, a Chicago Democrat, and Beth Coulson, a Glenview Republican. Illinois political legends Dawn Clark Netsch and Abner Mikva weighed in with their support. And, significantly, Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan gave his personal assurance that the legislature would address comprehensive ethics reform. His reputation for tenacity would provide comfort when negotiations became rocky.

In some respects, the government drafters narrowed the proposal. Reformers wanted, for instance, to open the work of the ethics commissions to public scrutiny. However, the drafters did broaden other aspects of the package. They banned state officials from appearing in public service announcements and banned lobbyists from serving on most state boards and commissions. Further, attempts to influence the state’s rule-making process were made part of the public record.

It was far from smooth sailing for reformers and lawmakers throughout the spring and summer. A comprehensive

ethics measure was approved in the House late in the spring session. But the Senate refused to call the House reform measure for a vote, insisting instead on a weaker version. With time running out on the spring session, the House relented and approved the Senate language. Then the governor used his amendatory veto power to push reforms more in keeping with what had been originally sought by reformers.

The final package agreed to in this fall’s session is striking in its breadth. It explicitly prohibits political activities on government time, including soliciting state employees for campaign contributions — long a problem in Illinois. It features strong enforcement through ethics commissions for the executive and legislative branches. Those commissions will oversee ethics training and adjudicate complaints. It institutes inspectors general with subpoena powers to investigate allegations of corruption. It shuts the revolving employment door: State employees who are materially involved in negotiating contracts in excess of \$25,000 with a prospective employer must wait a year before taking a job with that contractor. And it expands government whistleblower protections.

The reforms tighten Illinois’ “gift ban,” closing loopholes that allow free golf and tennis outings from lobbyists. And they expand disclosure requirements. Political committees that fail to report late contributions will be subject to stiff fines; lobbyists’ registration forms and economic interest statements will be made available to the public online; the so-called “shadow government,” the unpaid advisers to executive branch officers, will disclose their financial interests.

While no law is perfect, and nothing will stop someone determined to take advantage of the system, the reform package contains key safeguards that expose and prevent corruption. In part, it is designed to help state employees and officials do the right thing by providing guidance and training.

In fact, from the reformers’ perspective, the legislative and executive ethics commissions and the required training are key provisions of the law. The commissions will become the public

face of ethics, responsible for reporting on how well the integrity of government is being protected. We anticipate that the vast majority of business coming before the commissions will focus more on personnel-type matters than on concerns reaching the level of criminal activity, which must be referred to the appropriate authorities. The commissions' job will be to ensure that any wrongdoing that does take place is nipped in the bud before full-blown scandals are allowed to occur again.

The predecessor of this effort was the 1998 Gift Ban Act, ably negotiated by Mike Lawrence, former Gov. Jim Edgar's press secretary, and Paul Simon, a lifelong Democrat and supporter of ethics reform who died the day the new law was signed. Simon launched the Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, which Lawrence runs. Their groundbreaking package included a lobbyist gift ban, a ban on the personal use of campaign funds and a greatly expanded system of campaign disclosure.

The initial bumpy course of the 1998 Gift Ban Act may be instructive to us. In that fall's veto session, lawmakers attempted to roll back the act's strong disclosure provisions. Furthermore, the gift ban commissions created by that act were ridiculed after it was revealed appointees were

primarily government insiders. And the law was tied up in court for months throughout an unsuccessful challenge to its constitutionality. The reform community will work to avoid these pitfalls with the Ethics Act of 2003.

It is far too soon to speculate on which of the new law's many provisions may prove the most challenging to implement. The ban on lobbyists serving on state boards and the requirement to report attempts to influence rulemaking, so-called ex parte communication, have generated early attention. However, with legislation as sweeping as the ethics bill, the real challenge will be to ensure that the promise is met, that the disclosure and accountability principles underpinning it are respected in implementation.

We should celebrate passage of this sweeping legislation, but remember that legislation by itself is not enough to change a culture in which old-school politics and the tolerance of corruption runs as deep as it has in Illinois. It will take the demonstrated and vigorous commitment of our political leaders to truly change Illinois' infamous culture of corruption. ○

Cynthia Canary is director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, a government watchdog organization founded and chaired by the late U.S. Sen. Paul Simon.

It's far too soon to speculate on which of the legislation's many provisions may prove the most challenging to implement.

At a glance

The 2003 governmental ethics law:

- Creates strong, binding ethics commissions for the executive and legislative branches of state government that set standards for ethics training and hear complaints on ethics violations;
- Establishes five executive and one legislative branch inspectors general with subpoena powers to investigate complaints;
- Mandates ethics training for all state employees;
- Prohibits political activity on state time, including working on campaigns, soliciting or making political contributions and preparing or distributing campaign materials;
- Bans most lobbyist gifts, including golf and tennis outings;
- Shuts the revolving employment door for a year after leaving state employment for those who are materially involved in negotiating contracts in excess of \$25,000;
- Bans statewide and legislative officers from appearing in state-funded public service announcements;
- Expands whistleblower protections;
- Restricts state contractors and lobbyists from serving on most boards and commissions;
- Creates online electronic databases for lobbyist registration and gift reports;
- Requires disclosure of ex parte communication in rule making;
- Requires online posting of statements of economic interest;
- Requires financial disclosure by sponsors of issue ads featuring candidates in the period immediately before an election;
- Imposes stiff fines for political committees that fail to report funds received right before an election;
- Bans the use of state-printed mailings to supplement election campaigns; and
- Limits late-term gubernatorial appointments.

Cynthia Canary

BIT

Paul Simon

Abner Mikva didn't like *The New York Times*' coverage of the death of his friend, the former U.S. senator who died December 9 at 75. "They made him sound like a goodie two-shoes. He wasn't," says Mikva, a former federal appellate judge who served with Simon in the state legislature and in Congress. "He was an incredibly effective politician in the best sense of the word."

Simon's integrity may have looked like naivete in an era when a "gotcha" mentality tends to drive politics and journalism, says Mikva, who was White

House counsel in the midst of Simon's 1985-1997 Senate tenure. "Paul never operated that way. He would try to woo you on his own terms." He was incorruptible, never exhibited ill-will or threw around his clout.

Former Illinois Comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch says she's been asked frequently about what she believes to be Simon's legacy. "No. 1, he survived 40 or 45 or so years in politics with his integrity, credibility, compassion and thoughtfulness intact."

Simon, the son of Lutheran missionaries, was born in 1928 in Eugene, Ore. At 19, he was urged to buy a dying newspaper that served the southern Illinois region where his parents had settled. He exposed corruption while at the *Troy Tribune*, reporting that Madison County officials allowed prostitution and gambling to go unchecked. Eventually, he owned 14 weekly newspapers, then decided he could effect greater change from the inside of the political arena.

At 25, he was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives, where his first triumph was getting Right-to-Know on the books, requiring government bodies to meet in public.

He also found more corruption to expose. "Members talked openly about certain measures being 'money bills' and others being 'fetchers,'" Simon wrote in his autobiography. The fetcher was lucrative for lawmakers who were willing to introduce a bill, then kill it in exchange for lobbyists' cash. Mikva remembers Simon incurring the wrath of a fellow

lawmaker for interfering with a fetcher. That lawmaker told Simon, "The trouble with you Reverend ... is you don't know a good bill when you see it."

Later, when Simon couldn't convince news editors to investigate corruption in the legislature, he wrote an article himself, knowing he was putting his political career in jeopardy. After the article appeared in the September 1964 edition of *Harper's* magazine, some fellow lawmakers labeled him "Benedict Arnold."

After writing the piece, he served 10 more years in the legislature, the last six in the state Senate. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1974, serving until his election

to the U.S. Senate a decade later. Simon's only election setbacks were in primary bids for the governor's mansion in 1972 and the U.S. presidency in 1988.

Exposure, wrote Simon, is the best way to stop unethical behavior. Simon died the afternoon Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed a strong ethics bill. Netsch said when she spoke with Simon two days earlier, he told her it was too bad he wouldn't be able to attend the signing ceremony. "He was certainly there in spirit."

Simon was the first state official to require financial disclosure of his staff, their spouses and even minor children, remembers Gene Callahan, who served as Simon's press secretary after he was elected lieutenant governor in 1968. Simon disclosed his own sources of income right down to the \$1.58 refund from a clothing store. He did so throughout his career in elective office, which ended with his decision in 1996 not to run for the Senate again.

"He tolerated no dishonesty or lying. His basic philosophy was if you'd lie, you'd steal," says Callahan. "You'll never meet a man with more integrity, but there was more to him than integrity; he was kind and compassionate."

That compassion informs Mikva's assessment of Simon's stature among Illinois' greatest statesmen: "I think he's the best we've ever had. We've had some fine government officials, but none as absolutely decent as Paul Simon."



Paul Simon

For more information about people see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

Poet laureate

Kevin Stein is Illinois' new poet laureate. Gov. Rod Blagojevich chose him from a list of 25 nominees. The position has been vacant since 2000 when the former poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks died.

Stein is a professor of American literature at Bradley University. He has written several books, including *A Circus of Want*, which received the Devins Award for Poetry. He received the Frederick Bock Prize from *Poetry* magazine, the *Indiana Review* Poetry Prize and two Illinois Arts Council Literary Awards. He is a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship.

Unlike the previous three laureates — Howard Austin, Carl Sandburg and Brooks — this appointment is not for a lifetime. Blagojevich set the term at four years, with the option to renew. Stein will be expected to give at least four annual public readings and reach out to people in all regions of the state.

Read more about it on the Illinois Issues Web site.

Citizenship award

David Protes, the founding director of the Medill Innocence Project at Northwestern University in Evanston, has been awarded a \$100,000 humanitarian prize.

Protes led journalism students in investigations that helped free wrongfully convicted Death Row inmates.

The Puffin/Nation Prize for Creative Citizenship honors an individual each year whose socially responsible work has challenged the status quo. The sponsors are The Puffin Foundation Ltd. of New Jersey and The Nation Institute of New York.

Jail time

Former state Democratic Rep. Michael Curran was sentenced last month to a year and a day in prison and ordered to pay more than \$67,000 in restitution for doing personal and political work while being paid by the secretary of state's office. Curran, who now lives in Highland Park, represented a downstate district that included Springfield.

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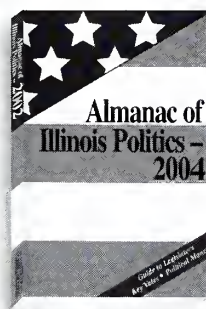
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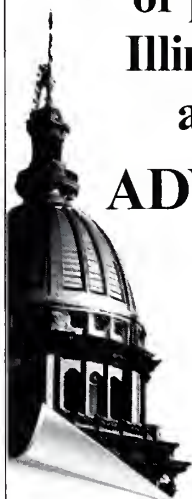
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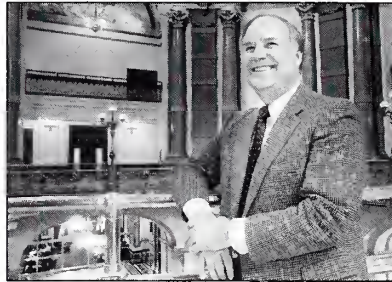
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Charles N. Wheeler III



Let's reflect for a moment on the lives of two extraordinary men

by Charles N. Wheeler III

As the new year dawns across Illinois, the state and its civic life are much the poorer for the untimely deaths late last year of two of the finest public servants ever to grace our prairies.

Within a month of each other in the waning days of 2003, veteran journalist and educator Bill Miller and former U.S. Sen. Paul Simon passed away.

At first glance, one might not notice the common threads running through the lives of the two men. After all, Bill never held public office, while Paul was elected to state and national posts and ran for the presidency in 1988.

Yet closer inspection reveals that they shared many commonalities, from their modest beginnings as idealistic reporters to the immense, positive impact their careers had on public life in Illinois.

Both exemplified the qualities upon which democratic government rests, such virtues as unquestioned honesty, imperturbable civility, unfailing decency, abiding compassion and a deep commitment to the commonweal.

Both believed strongly in service to others, whether as a journalist helping inform folks about important public policy questions, or as an elected officeholder using the power of government to improve the lives of average citizens.

Both shared a firm conviction that the public's business should be conducted out in the open, not behind closed doors, so that people could see what their elected leaders and other public officials were up to. Both worked

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tirelessly to transform the ideal of open government into a reality in Illinois. Both championed governmental ethics before such probity was fashionable.

And, on a more personal note, both were lifelong educators who were instrumental in the birth and subsequent flourishing of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield, the educational endeavor that I now have the good fortune to head.

Reflect for a moment, gratefully, on the lives and legacies of these two extraordinary men.

Born Alvin Pistorius in Carlinville, Bill Miller adopted his professional name at the behest of a radio news director who thought "Pistorius" was too much of a tongue-twister for downstate listeners.

A University of Illinois graduate, Bill

started at Springfield AM station WTAX in 1949, serving as a reporter and news director until 1967, when he became managing editor of CIB News, a Statehouse radio news service.

At WTAX, Bill gained a reputation as a resourceful reporter who took seriously the media's obligation to be the public's watchdog over the conduct of public affairs, earning an Edward R. Murrow Radio Documentary Award in 1967 for his investigation of a crooked furniture deal.

The son of Lutheran missionaries, Paul Simon first gained public attention as the 19-year-old publisher of a weekly newspaper in Troy who crusaded against political corruption and organized crime in Madison County.

First elected to the Illinois House in 1954, he was re-elected three times, before serving six years in the Illinois Senate.

As a reformist, he spoke out courageously against the seamier side of Illinois lawmaking, most notably in a 1964 *Harper's* magazine article on legislative corruption, which made him a pariah among many of his elected colleagues. Paul also sponsored the state's Open Meetings Act, which newsman Bill Miller — ever a champion of open government — helped write.

Indeed, Bill also was among the media professionals who helped pen the state's Freedom of Information Act and was co-founder and charter president of the

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Illinois Freedom of Information Council. His unflagging passion for the public's right to know earned him "Illinoisian of the Year" honors in 1989 from the Illinois News Broadcasters Association — which he co-founded — and the Illinois Press Association's James Craven Freedom of the Press Award in 1998.

Paul, meanwhile, was winning "Best Legislator" awards year after year from the Independent Voters of Illinois, a string broken when Illinoisans in 1968 chose the Democratic Simon as lieutenant governor to Republican Gov. Richard Ogilvie, the only such partisan mismatch in state history.

Despite their partisan differences, the two men developed a professional relationship based on respect and trust. Ironically, their civility was supplanted by mutual distrust and disdain between their successors, though Gov. Dan Walker and Lt. Gov. Neil Hartigan were both Democrats.

Simon's loss to Walker in the 1972 Democratic gubernatorial primary was a blessing for three-year-old Sangamon

***Paul Simon and Bill Miller
— two remarkable
individuals whose lives
epitomized public service
of the highest order.***

State University, whose president, Robert Spencer, invited him to join the university faculty. Working closely with senior members of the Statehouse press corps, they fashioned a graduate program combining academic work with hands-on experience to provide young journalists with a better understanding of government and politics and with enhanced reporting and writing skills to inform the public about government news.

Paul became the PAR program's first director in 1972, a position he held until resuming his political career as a successful candidate for Congress two years later. Bill was named director in 1974, and under his leadership the fledgling program prospered, attracting talented and motivated students from undergraduate schools across the nation. By the time he retired in 1993, the PAR family numbered hundreds of alums who have gone on to distinguish themselves as professionals, a legacy that has enriched public understanding of government and politics throughout the nation.

Paul Simon and Bill Miller — two remarkable individuals whose lives epitomized public service of the highest order. "All of us would do well to honor his memory by striving to live our lives with his as our model," said House Speaker Michael Madigan, speaking of Simon. Sound advice, too, in celebration of Bill Miller. ○

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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